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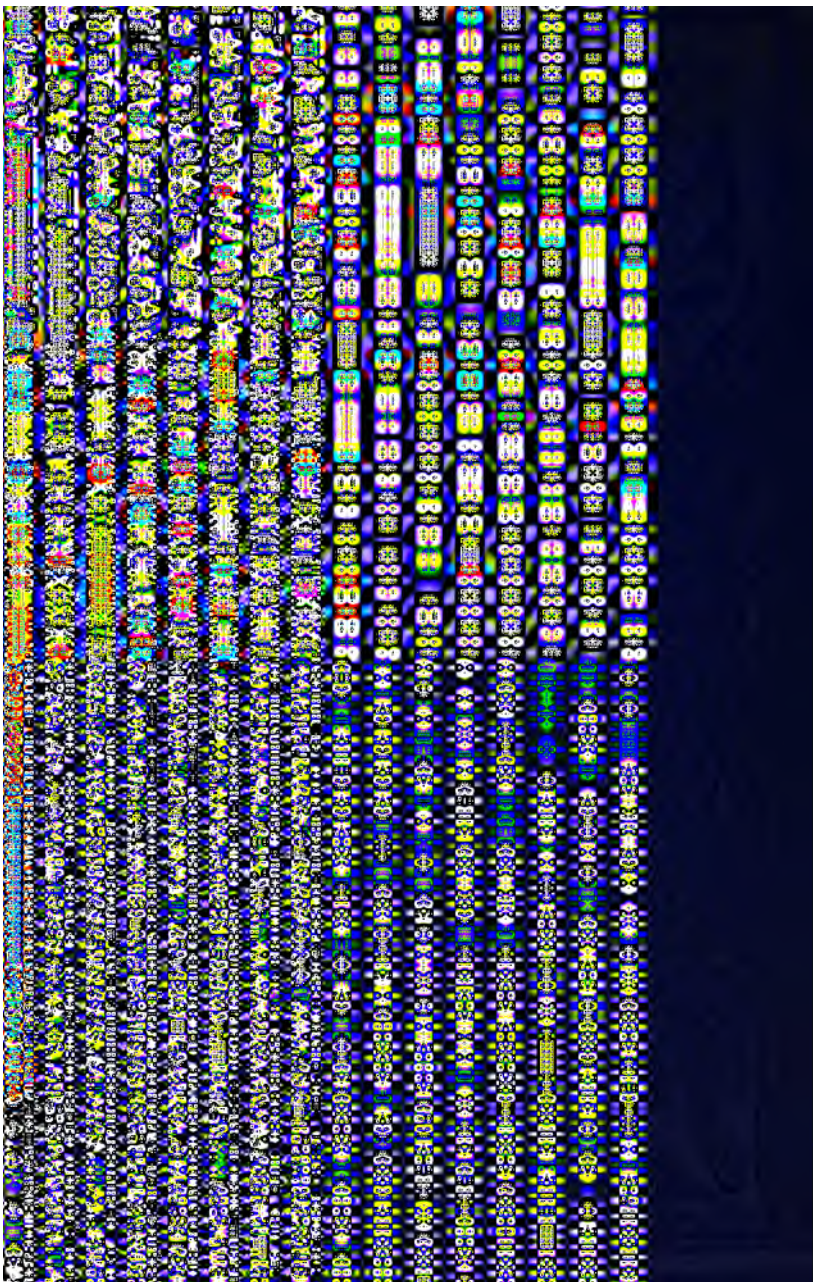
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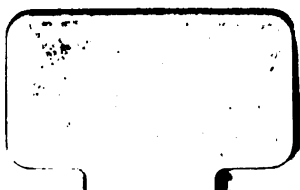
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THE
BETTER WAY;

OR,

What do I live for?

BY

MISS RANDALL BALLANTYNE.

Life is real! life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

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THE BETTER WAY;

OR,

WHAT DO I LIVE FOR?

CHAPTER I.

"AUNT," said I, "I am perfectly sick and weary of everything in this world;" and as I raised my eyes from my work they met hers fixed upon me with an expression of puzzled astonishment which almost made me smile.

"My dear!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," I continued, "it is quite true. I see no use in living,—no satisfaction, no object to be attained in anything; and I think that, after all, uncle Jacob was quite right when he said that 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' I do indeed, aunt, and there's no use in saying I don't."

"My dear Harriet," she replied, "you distress me exceedingly by making such remarks as these. I do not wish to speak disrespect-

fully of your uncle Jacob, still I must say that I think the opinions and maxims of a morose and disappointed old man are not at all suitable to be adopted by a young girl of sixteen."

"But, aunt, if, after all that uncle Jacob has seen and enjoyed of life, he has come to such a conclusion at the age of sixty, this gives me little hope in looking forward to a long life, so I trust I shall never reach his age: a short life and a merry one for me!" But there was no mirth in the weary sigh with which I closed my speech.

"I have lived for fifty years," said aunt Martha gravely, "and, thank God, I have never had any such feeling as you express, except indeed once, and then it did not last long."

"And when was that?" said I, wearily. "Will you tell me about it?"

"Indeed there is not much to tell," she said. "It was soon after my husband's death, when my little Grace was laid up with measles, and so ill that there was not much hope of her life, and night and day I was kept a close prisoner in her room. You can't remember it, my dear, for I had sent you to visit your uncle Jacob that you might be out of the way. But at

that time I had a set of careless servants, who let everything go to wreck and ruin the moment their mistress's back was turned. One day I managed to leave Grace in order to pay a hasty visit to the kitchen, larder, and linen presses, and I found things in such a state that I determined to have a thorough re-ordering of all my domestic arrangements the instant my child's health would permit of my doing so; but the very day she was pronounced out of danger, I was seized with a rheumatic fever, which kept me confined to bed for six weeks; and, as I lay tossing about in helpless inactivity, my thoughts were anything but pleasant. I knew that Grace would be sadly neglected, and that my house would soon be in a state of disorder, which was almost enough to distract a neat, particular housekeeper like myself. And when at length I did get up and began my rounds, something of the feeling you have been speaking of took possession of my mind, for I recollect using your uncle's very words, 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.' I had always been famous as a manager and housekeeper, and prided myself on deserving the character, so it greatly disheartened me to find

the work of months undone by a set of idle and thriftless menials."

"And what did you do?" I asked.

"*Do!*" she replied, "why, what a strange question to ask! I set to work immediately, of course, dismissed the careless servants, got and trained new ones, and never rested till my whole household department had resumed its usual satisfactory appearance. But it *was* a trial, to see the labour of one's hands destroyed by the bad management of others."

"But I have no house to be interested in," I sighed; "and even if I had, I am sure I should not find it enough to occupy *all* my thoughts and energies."

"My child," said aunt, "you have your studies to attend to; for although you have now left school, it would be a sad pity to forget all the accomplishments which it cost so much to give you. And then you have your young companions with whom to amuse yourself; and as I am no longer so young or strong as I once was, I shall be delighted to give you such instructions in managing a house as will enable you to supply my place when

the infirmities of age shall have come upon me."

"I will help you willingly, dear aunt, but you know that I have no taste for house-keeping, and I fear I shall never acquire one."

"Don't say that, Harriet. Every woman ought to have a taste for managing her domestic concerns; or, if she has not, the sooner she sets herself to acquire it the better. Did you but know the comfort that arises from a well-regulated household, and the *discomfort* which attends neglect of these things, you would not speak thus."

"You are right there, aunt," I said, looking round the comfortable and beautifully neat drawing-room in which we were seated, and contrasting our home with sundry ill-managed abodes in our good town, which, as aunt spoke, arose vividly before my mind's eye.

"Besides," she continued, "there are many other pleasant duties which fall within the sphere of a woman's work which remain for you to fulfil; and if, after all those duties have been attended to, you should still find time to weary of your life"—and aunt smiled somewhat roguishly as she said this—"I shall be

too happy to have you employ some of your spare hours in assisting your cousin Grace. You are nearly double her age, and therefore able to bring her on materially in her studies. Only think what an influence a girl like you may exercise over the child, for good or evil. I should not like her to hear any of your strange speeches about vexation of spirit."

I was silent at this, for my conscience began to reproach me for the useless life I had been leading ever since I left school three months before. I had quite neglected poor Grace, who was a stupid and rather uninteresting child; at least *I* thought her so, but that was because I had never made any attempt to interest myself in *her* pursuits or feelings; and, finding her too young to be able to enter into mine, had gradually ceased to think or care about her at all, save when, finding her troublesome, I begged her to be quiet, or else sent her out of my way. "But, aunt," I said at length, willing still to justify myself, "those words so often in uncle Jacob's mouth are, after all, not his. You know it is Solomon who says that 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit;' and being in the Bible, they *must* be true."

"That is very true, my dear; I never thought of that. Somehow I had got to think these words were uncle Jacob's own, for he is always saying them, and he is such a discontented old man—no disrespect to your uncle, Harriet, my dear—that really when one looks at him, one is tempted to believe them true, which I hope and trust they are not."

"But, aunt, if everything is *not* vanity and vexation of spirit, why did Solomon say so?"

Aunt Martha's countenance grew grave and perplexed as I put this question, and there was a pause ere she replied: "Solomon was a very wise man, my dear, and it is not for me to contradict him, more especially as his words are in the Bible; but I think that either he expected too much from the world, and so was disappointed, or else—"

"Or else what?" I asked somewhat impatiently.

"The fact is, my dear," she said most ingenuously, "the fact is, I never thought of the matter before in this light, and I don't feel able to give an opinion about it, so I think we had better wait till Mr. Blackwood comes to tea, which you know he has promised to do

soon, and then we can ask him to explain the passage."

To this I made no reply, for I had not much confidence in Mr. Blackwood's powers of solving difficulties, although he was a minister.

After a while, aunt continued: "As for me, though I have had my share of troubles in this life as well as my neighbours, yet I have had so many mercies to be thankful for, and have spent so many happy hours, that I would feel myself most ungrateful to Almighty God if I were to say that I have found everything to be only vanity and vexation of spirit."

At that moment, and evidently to aunt's great relief, the bell rang, and two visitors were announced.

"Miss Bissill," said the maid, throwing open the drawing-room door very wide.

CHAPTER II.

MISS BISSILL, and her sister, Miss Olivia, or, as the neighbours generally called her, Miss Livy, were two elderly ladies who had lived all their lives in our town, and were frequent

visitors at the house of my aunt, with whom they had been on habits of friendly intimacy for many years. On their entrance, I took up the work which I had dropped during our discussion, and began to sew diligently, determined to show that this occupation had my whole attention, for the Misses Bissill were no favourites of mine. After the usual compliments and inquiries as to health, mingled with remarks on the state of the weather, the elder lady turned to aunt Martha with an eager face and said:—

“Have you heard the news, Mrs. Russell?”

“No,” replied aunt; “what news?”

“What! is it possible that no one has told you yet? What will you say when you hear that young Dunlop has stolen a large sum of money from the bank, and has run off, it is said, to America, leaving his mother and sister in a pretty scrape.”

“Young Dunlop!” exclaimed my aunt, “that well-doing youth! Oh how grieved I am! The poor, poor mother!”

But Miss Bissill hurried on without noticing the distress her news had caused.

“Yes, and things have just happened as I

often told Mrs. Dunlop they *would* happen. She always gave those children of hers their own way, and it is long since I prophesied how things would turn out, only she never would believe me; but you see I have proved right after all."

"And you are glad to have done so," I mentally exclaimed; and Miss Bissill's usual vinegary aspect seemed to grow ten times sourer as I glanced at her while she made the above-mentioned amiable speech.

"After all, I can't help being very sorry for her," said Miss Livy, turning to her sister with a sort of apologetic expression of countenance. "Only think; people say that this will ruin them, for with Mrs. Dunlop's ideas of honour, she will be sure to do her utmost to pay back all that the unfortunate Edward has taken, and to do that they must scrimp for many a day."

"Scrimping won't do," rejoined Miss Bissill, with a sage shake of the head. "I suppose he stole upwards of a thousand pounds, so they must sell their house and furniture. I always thought their style of living was too grand for a banker's widow. But pride will have a fall,

as I said to Miss Yellowlees this morning when she told me of Edward's conduct."

"I don't remember noticing anything like pride in the Dunlops," remarked my aunt.

"No!" exclaimed Miss Bissill. "Pray what do you call it but pride to have such an idea of one's children as Mrs. Dunlop always has had, ay, and expressed too? And then, only think of the way that daughter of hers dresses: nothing but the richest silks and the finest laces for her, forsooth! But I trust *this* will bring them to their senses."

"The beautiful dresses!" ejaculated Miss Livy—(Miss Livy's great hobby was dress)—
"Do you think, sister, that they will be selling their dresses? How I should like to buy that blue silk with the yellow flowers! I don't think Miss Dunlop can have had it on more than twice, and, with a *little* alteration, it would make me an elegant dress for all my tea-parties next winter."

No one made any reply to this lucubration of Miss Livy, my aunt apparently being too much sunk in sorrowful reflections to have heard it, and Miss Bissill being above attending to "poor Livy's haverings," as she amiably

termed her sister's conversation; but to me it was matter of considerable amusement, for I could not but contrast the appearance of Anna Dunlop, a tall, slender girl of nineteen, with the portly little figure before me, and I doubted if even aunt Martha's powers as a sempstress could avail to render the dress of the one expansive enough to suit the other.

At length aunt looked up: "What a mercy," she said, "that Anna is engaged to such a nice respectable young man as Captain Bruce! This at least will be some solace for the poor mother in her misfortunes."

"Oh, but, as Miss Yellowlees and I were saying, Captain Bruce's family will never hear of the match taking place *now*, even if the young man were fool enough to wish it, after what has happened. *I* have an idea that *that* is at an end." Miss Bissill looked like an oracle as she uttered these words.

"Dear, dear," said Miss Livy, "do you really think so? And what then will become of all the fine things she has ordered from Miss De Blonde? For my part I would feel it very sad to have the wedding clothes all ready, and the wedding to be put off after all!"

"Don't speak nonsense, Livy," said her sister, shortly.

"But I really *am* sorry for the poor Dunlops," she repeated. "I can't help it, Judith."

Miss Livy looked so distressed that I almost began to like her, and the pink and yellow flowers in her enormous bonnet seemed less horrible than usual.

"I must be going now," said Miss Bisail, rising and drawing up her tall, bony figure to its utmost height; "I have a whole round of calls to make this morning:" and she stalked out of the room, her stout little sister waddling after her, repeating, as she descended the stairs, "Dear, dear, to think of the fine new dresses, and no wedding after all!"

"Now, aunt," I exclaimed, when the house door was fairly shut, "*this* has been a pretty commentary on our text! I don't think we need ask Mr. Blackwood's opinion as to its being true. There has Mrs. Dunlop, as you have often told me, been toiling ever since her husband's death to educate her son and daughter, and to fit them for their path in life; and now, after all her pains, her son robs his employers and decamps, and her daughter's

engagement is to be broken off, just when they most need something to cheer them. If *that* isn't vanity and vexation of spirit, I don't know what is."

"It is indeed very sad, Harriet; at the same time you must not jump too hastily to conclusions; let us hear more about the affair before we decide that it is as bad as Miss Bissill makes it out."

"Oh, as to that odious Miss Bissill (I beg your pardon, aunt, but really she *is* a shocking woman), I do believe she is delighted at the whole affair, just because she prophesied it! I would give anything that it turned out to be a parcel of falsehoods, if it were for nothing but to provoke *her*, and to convince her that she can be mistaken now and then, as well as her neighbours."

"Fy, fy," said aunt Martha; "that is acting as ill as Miss Bissill herself: for if, as you say, she is rejoicing at Mrs. Dunlop's afflictions because she prophesied they would come, and *you* are anxious that the whole thing should prove false, not for Mrs. Dunlop's sake, but in order to vex Miss Bissill, I must say I see but little difference between you."

I blushed deeply as aunt spoke, and felt ashamed of the sentiments I had expressed.

"I was wrong, aunt, to speak as I did ; but I did not mean exactly what I said. I do grieve for poor Mrs. Dunlop, and my anger against Miss Bissill was called forth by her being glad at a neighbour's calamity."

"But I trust she is *not* glad of it," said aunt ; "that would be the sign of a bad heart indeed, and, notwithstanding all her censoriousness, I should be grieved to think that an old friend like her had a bad heart."

"What a life those two women lead !" said I ; "the one goes about all day long collecting and repeating scandal ; and the other's whole heart and soul are in the adorning of her fat little person."

"We must not judge too harshly of others," replied aunt Martha, mildly.

"Dear aunt !" I exclaimed, kissing her fondly, "I am sure *you* never judge hardly of any one, I wish all the world were like you ; but oh, I do trust I shall not be an old maid !"

"Why not ?" said she, smiling.

"Because I should so dislike to be always talking scandal, and to be for ever at tea parties, like

Miss Bissill; or to have my thoughts constantly occupied with silk gowns and new collars, like Miss Livy."

"Dear child, how you do talk! You forget that all old maids are not like the Misses Bissill; for, much though I like them for old acquaintance sake, yet I cannot be blind to their faults. But look at Miss Winslow, Harriet; what do you think of her? There is an old maid whom every one loves, and who never talks scandal. She is beautifully neat too in her dress; but for all that I don't believe it ever occupies her thoughts a moment after she has put it on."

"But you forget, aunt, that I don't know Miss Winslow yet, for she was away from home when I returned from school, and I have only seen her once since she came back, and then just for a moment, when you introduced me coming out of church."

"True, I had forgotten that," she replied; "but I hope you will soon make her acquaintance, for she is a very worthy lady."

"But Annie Gordon says she is a Methodist, and such a strict and particular old lady; so I fear I shan't like her much, aunt."

"She *has* some peculiar opinions, I believe, niece; but you must not put implicit faith in everything your friend Annie says, for she is a young person of rather too much levity, and is foolish enough to laugh at all old maids just because they are so, without stopping to consider whether or not they deserve her satirical remarks."

As I knew this to be my young friend's character, I had nothing to say in her defence, so I returned to the Misses Bissill.

"Tell me, aunt," I said, "what do these ladies live for? For my part, I would be still more sick of my life than I am if I were to change places with either of them."

"My dear," replied my aunt, "it is not for me to say what they live for, but I think that if we do our own duty well, instead of finding fault with our neighbours, we shall be far better and happier members of society. You have not to answer for the conduct of the Misses Bissill, so don't concern your little head about it: have you not quite enough to do with your own one life, my dear niece?"

And with a kiss and a pat on the shoulder, aunt Martha left the room to go and super-

intend some of her household duties, and I was left alone.

"Ay, that's it," I sighed moodily to myself; "my own one life, as aunt expresses it; that is what I have got to do with. But *how* am I to spend it, and for what purpose? there is the question; and, notwithstanding my long talk with aunt, I don't feel a bit nearer the answer than I was. Oh! if those words would not keep tormenting me as they do! All is va—; no, I won't say them,—I won't believe them. But then, are they not in the Bible? and if so, are they not true? Well, shall I ask Mr. Blackwood about it? But his prayers are so tedious, and his preaching so *very* dry, that I am sure I should not care a bit for any explanation he could give. I think *his* life must be a weary one too, to judge from the way he hurries over his religious duties, and the matter-of-fact way in which he replies to any serious questions I have ever heard put to him. No, I don't think his heart can be in his work, so I don't care to ask him about my perplexities."

Here I brought my meditations to a sudden close, for something within me whispered that

in thus criticizing my neighbours I was on the fair way to become a second Miss Bissill; and horror at the very possibility of such a consummation of things, more than dread of her sin, made me anxious to banish the whole subject from my mind: so, rising, I laid aside my work, and hastening to the piano-forte, began to play one of Beethoven's sonatas; and very soon, amid the beautiful creations of that master-mind, every disquieting subject was, for the time at least, completely banished from my thoughts.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day, as aunt Martha and I were at work, and busy discussing some arrangements for a little tea-party which we meant to give, a stop was put to our conversation by the entrance of the very person of whom we had been talking the day before, Miss Winslow; and the first thing which struck me about her was the peculiarly sweet smile with which she greeted me as, somewhat ungraciously, I arose and held out my hand. Annie Gordon's hints about Methodism, and sundry vague and unde-

fixed ideas regarding old maids generally, were still lingering in my mind; but Miss Winslow's sunny smile soon won its way through the gloom and dispersed them. She had come to talk to aunt about a Dorcas meeting, of which they were both members; and she stated the case of a poor woman, whom she described as having been found in great poverty and distress, owing, she believed, to the drunkenness of her husband. For this woman and her four young children she was anxious to procure some of the clothing made by the society; and after hearing the recital, aunt Martha was of opinion that it was quite a case to be mentioned at their next meeting, and so promised to give her voice in asking relief for her.

"The miserable state of the poor woman," added Miss Winslow, "sick and in poverty and rags, is enough of itself to create compassion; but what interests me in her still more is, that she appears to be anxiously seeking to know the way of life."

"The way of life!" I repeated to myself; what does she mean by that, I wonder? How I do long to ask her! Yet I don't quite like to. I suppose it is something I ought not to

be ignorant of. From having followed my own train of thought, I missed aunt's reply; and the next thing I heard was Miss Winslow's voice, saying, "She has hitherto found nothing but sin and sorrow in her self-chosen ways, but now I trust she is learning what God teaches all his own children, that until we have found peace in him, there is no true happiness in life for us." I looked up eagerly as I heard these words, and the thought flashed across me, Has not this something to do with my perplexities? "No true happiness in life?" I am sure *I* have none! But *why* is this? Can it be that I have no peace in God? No, that is impossible, for I say my prayers night and morning, go regularly to church, and do all my religious duties well. Besides, Miss Winslow is speaking of the wife of some poor drunken creature, so it is no wonder that *she* has no peace and no happiness. I daresay, too; she is very unhappy because she is so poor. How glad I am that aunt is not poor! It must be a sad thing to live in a dirty, smoky house, and be obliged to wear ragged clothes. Poor creature, I should like very much to make her and her children some

frocks. As I thought thus, my heart grew lighter, and I looked up at Miss Winslow with a serener face than I had felt conscious of possessing for some time. Her eyes were fixed on me with a kind and inquiring expression; and she said, in answer to my look,—

“What are *you* thinking of, dear Miss Harriet? You seem to be pondering something important.”

I smiled and blushed slightly, as I replied, “I was thinking how much I should like to assist in making some clothes for your poor woman, and how glad I shall be if you will allow me to share in the work.”

“We shall not only allow you, but be most grateful for your aid, my dear young friend; and you know ‘he that hath compassion on the poor lendeth to the Lord.’ I trust it is He who has put it into your heart to do this.”

Again the kindly blue eyes of the old lady rested on me with an expression which attracted me irresistibly towards her. I longed to ask her why she looked so happy, and why I was not so; but courage still failed me. There was something very winning in Miss Winslow’s whole appearance. The hand

of time had left but a slight impress on her smooth forehead; and her mild blue eyes were clear and bright as in the days of sunny youth. Peace and contentment sat enthroned in her countenance, and her slight little figure had the easy grace of one accustomed to move in the best society. This rather astonished me, as I knew the retired life she led, and that her society was far more confined to the inhabitants of the poor lanes and cottages of the neighbourhood, than to the politer circles of our good town. But I had not yet learned the secret of true politeness, any more than I had the way of peace; so it was not to be wondered at that much in Miss Winslow was a mystery to me.

Aunt Martha highly approved of my plan of working for the poor woman; and then, turning to Miss Winslow, she changed the subject, by asking her if she could give her any further account of the sad affair of Edward Dunlop.

A shade rested on the old lady's face as she replied, "Poor Mrs. Dunlop, she is indeed greatly to be pitied. This has been a sad trial to her. Still, it is a blessing to know

that things are not so bad as they at first appeared. There has been far more of thoughtlessness than of crime in the matter."

"How so?" asked aunt eagerly. "Did not Edward rob the bank, and run off with the money to America?"

Miss Winslow's eyes opened wide as she heard this; and on my aunt's continuing, "Yes, and Miss Bissill says that it will completely ruin all Miss Dunlop's prospects with Captain Bruce," an expression of indignation became visible, which I thought so gentle a countenance could scarcely wear.

"I am happy to tell you," she replied, "that Miss Bissill has been completely misinformed. The *true* account of the affair is this: Edward Dunlop, against his mother's wishes, formed a great intimacy with young Henry Johnstone, who, although a clever and gentlemanly young man, is of a very extravagant nature, and is perpetually getting into debt. He is a gamester also; and I believe Edward used frequently to remonstrate with him, and tried to point out the evils of pursuing such courses; but it would have been better had he followed his mother's advice, and forsaken his

society altogether. He was, however, fascinated by his companion's talents and agreeable manners; so he continued the intimacy, forgetting that the Lord has said, 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' One day last week, Johnstone went to Edward in great distress, and told him he had a 'debt of honour,'—so he called it,—and that if it were not paid within twelve hours he would be a disgraced and ruined man. He implored him, therefore, to lend him the money,—no less a sum than five hundred pounds,—promising faithfully to repay him in four or five days. He refused to tell in what way he had got into debt, and kept saying that if *his friend* failed him, it was all over with his character. Edward, it appears, frankly told him that he did not possess such a sum, and that his mother was quite unable to lend him so much money at a moment's notice; adding, that she never lent him money without first knowing what use he was going to make of it. On hearing this, Johnstone declared himself a ruined man, and so artfully tried to work on poor Edward's feelings, that he said he was

me of a physician who was one day going through an hospital with a young medical friend, to whom he gave the following directions: "This entire ward you will leech; that one," pointing to the opposite side, "you will physic: and to-morrow you will reverse the treatment, physicking this ward and leeching that." So we were all leeches and physicked *en masse*, and, I have no doubt, prospered as well as the patients of —— hospital. It may be thought that the religious instruction we were in the habit of receiving at Mrs. Primrose's would have tended to enlighten me, and bring me out of my difficulties; but whether it was that the instruction was ill conveyed, or that I did not receive it aright, I cannot pretend to say; all I know is the melancholy fact, that instead of lessening my perplexities, "the Bible hour" did but increase them ten-fold. Some of the young ladies were Episcopalians, and as they repeated their catechism, I used to listen to the words in which they promised to renounce the devil and all his works and the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and then I compared that with Mrs. Primrose's oft-repeated wish that her

young ladies should make a figure in the world; and I remembered the conversations which went on out of school hours, in which the delighted anticipation of these same pomps and vanities held a most conspicuous place. Those of us who were Presbyterians stood up and replied to the question, "What is the chief end of man?" in the solemn and comprehensive words of our catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever;" and I longed for our teacher to give us an explanation of these words. But no explanation was ever given; to repeat the answer correctly was considered enough; so, as usual, when wearied with my own fruitless researches, I turned to the little world around me, and tried to see wherein we made that our chief end. But little to enlighten me met my view. Mrs. Primrose's chief end seemed to be a desire that her pupils should say their lessons well and do her credit, and a longing for the time to come when she might be able to retire upon an independency, and no longer be obliged to teach. The girls' chief end was to have done with school as soon as possible, that they might enter on the bright world spread out before

them,—balls and lovers and conquests appearing to be the goal *they* aimed at. One day, when the words of the catechism had been ringing in my ears, I ventured to ask Mrs. Primrose what was meant by our glorifying God. The Bible class had just been dismissed, but I lingered behind my companions to ask this question ; and I shall not easily forget the astonished look which my teacher's face assumed as she listened to so unusual an interrogatory. Involuntarily she took up the book, and was about to open it, when I exclaimed, " But please, Mrs. Primrose, I don't want to know what the catechism says, for I have read it a hundred times over : I want to know what *you* understand by glorifying God ; for as it is called our chief end, it must be something very important."

" Certainly, my dear Miss Russel," she replied, " you are quite right in thinking it very important, and I am glad to find you are so attentive to your Bible studies. What *I* understand by glorifying God is,"—and here Mrs. Primrose paused, and cleared her throat once or twice, and then continued, " to glorify God, is to do one's duty in that state of life in which God has placed us."

"But what is one's duty?" I asked, for I did not feel that this answer cast much light on the subject.

"One's duty, Miss Russel! why, how can you ask so ignorant a question? *My* duty is to teach—*yours* to learn."

"Yes, but to learn what?"

"To learn your lessons, of course; to be kind to your school-fellows, obedient to your teachers, and to fit yourself for that position in society to which you will be called on leaving my seminary. That is your duty, Miss Russel, and it appears to me to be very plain and simple. And now," she continued, taking out her watch, "it is five minutes past the hour for your geography lesson, and your master is waiting; remember that punctuality forms also a part of *your* duty." So, with a smile and a pat on the shoulder, I was dismissed. After this I asked very few questions of any one,—*none* of Mrs. Primrose; but I tried, though much discouraged, to follow her advice to do my duty to the best of my power. Very uphill work it was, however, as I soon found; nor did it bring me at all nearer the satisfaction I aimed at. It is true, that having

applied myself to my studies with redoubled diligence, I soon won the approbation of my teachers, and attained to the first place in my class; but once there, I was forced to relax my endeavours, having none with whom to compete; while my success, instead of imparting a salutary emulation to my school-fellows, only made them jealous of me, and envious looks and unjust remarks met me now on all sides. I remembered then that Mrs. Primrose had said that kindness to my companions formed a part of my duty; so I set myself to show them every kindness in my power, helping them with their lessons, lending them my books, &c., and striving to bear with their unamiable tempers; but I found this a still harder task than studying. My own temper was quick and hasty, and the attempt to curb theirs often ended in the loss of my own; so that it seemed to me a vain thing to think of succeeding in anything, and I at last began to feel that, in spite of all my exertions, I was as far from having done my duty as ever.

It may seem strange that it never once occurred to me to go with my troubles to the

fountainhead of all truth and wisdom : had I but remembered that it is written, " If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, *and it shall be given him,*" my trials had not lasted so long ; but it is a mournful truth that God is the last being to whom the carnal heart will have recourse in its perplexities, and will go to Him only after it has proved all else to be broken cisterns which can hold no water.

My last quarter at school was a sad one: constant strivings after what never seemed attainable marked its course, and therefore it was with a feeling of great relief that, having attained the respectable age of sixteen, my education was pronounced finished, and I was sent home loaded with prizes, and with a certificate of having made great progress, and done my duty to the entire satisfaction of my respected governess, and the various masters who attended the " Lanark Institution for Young Ladies." My aunt was quite as much pleased with my progress as Mrs. Primrose had been, and if *I* had my doubts as to the satisfactory termination of my education, the plea-

sure of being once more at home, and the excitement of making new acquaintances and renewing old ones prevented my doubts from giving me much annoyance ; but as time wore on, and the novelty of my position ceased to interest me, the old feelings came back in full force, and it was during one of my sad and disappointed fits that I gave utterance to the exclamation with which I began my story, that I was sick and weary of everything in the world.

CHAPTER V.

VERY nearly the whole of my next quarter's pocket-money was spent in the purchase of flannels and pretty printed dresses for the poor woman, Anne Mason, and her children. Aunt Martha called me generous, and that gave me a pleasant, self-satisfied feeling, as I sat day after day working beside her. No one understood cutting out and shaping and fitting better than my aunt : it was wonderful how great a length she could make a small piece of cloth go, and under her guidance I began to make rapid progress in all the intricacies of back

stitch, plain seam, herring-bone, &c. &c. Then I felt myself so useful, and pleased my fancy by anticipating the delight and gratitude of the sick woman, when I should carry her so charming a present. At length the work came to an end, and I folded the garments very neatly up, covered them with brown paper, and tied them carefully with twine: and then, after viewing the parcel with extreme satisfaction, I sent a message to Miss Winslow to tell her that they were ready; for she had promised to go with me herself, to introduce me to Anne, and I hoped we might be able to do so the next morning. When the servant returned it was with a slip of paper on which was written the poor woman's address, and a message from Miss Winslow, saying how much she regretted not being able to accompany me owing to severe indisposition. This was a great disappointment, for I secretly wished to become better acquainted with Miss Winslow, whose cheerful countenance and kindly smile had made quite an impression on my heart. There was no help for it, however, so aunt and I set off alone, and after some difficulty succeeded in finding the dwelling of our sick friend. A wretched hovel it was, close

and dark, the window panes broken in many parts, and patched with dirty brown paper. On a poor-looking bed in one corner lay the sick woman, pale and emaciated, and in various parts of the room were the four starved-looking children, crying and fighting with each other. I was unaccustomed to such scenes, and my heart sank within me as I looked around; but aunt bustled up to the bed, patting the head of one child as she passed it, and lifting another from a dangerous proximity to the fire, in which there was more smoke than flame however. And then, in cheering tones, she addressed the invalid.

"Look, Anne," she said, "what my niece has brought you."

I produced my parcel, and the dull, sickly face brightened up as the warm flannels and pretty frocks met the mother's gaze.

"May God reward you, dear young lady!" she exclaimed, and her burning hand grasped mine with fervour.

I felt amply repaid for my labour; but my pleasure was a little damped when the children rushed forward, and seizing the clean frocks with their dirty fingers dragged them to the floor,

screaming out "Give this one to me, mammy—" "See, mammy, Johnnie has taken all the flannel!"

Aunt Martha managed at length to quiet and separate them, and then turning again to the mother, she asked her some questions concerning her illness, and promised to send her soup and other necessities. The woman's thanks were suddenly interrupted by a noise at the door, and a gruff voice calling out for admission. I noticed an expression of fear pass over Anne's face as she heard the voice, and the children shrank timidly into the farthest end of the room. Suddenly the door was pushed open, and a man entered, evidently far from sober. He staggered up to the bed, and began in shocking language to abuse the poor woman for not having opened the door sooner; but on seeing strangers he suddenly stopped, muttered something which I did not understand, and then hastened back to the door, pulling it towards him with a great noise as he left the house. The sick woman looked much agitated, and begged my aunt to excuse this scene. It was her husband, she said, who was in a very bad mood that day, as he had been drinking too freely.

"Oh that whisky!" she groaned out; "that curse of the poor man's dwelling; when will it please God to deliver my poor husband from its power."

And she looked up in aunt's face with a wistful expression, which made me feel deeply for her. Aunt replied kindly, saying she hoped he would change some day; he certainly would when he saw the misery his evil habits were bringing on his family. But Anne looked disappointed,—it seemed to me that she had expected consolation of another kind,—as if aunt's remarks had not met her case, for she sighed as she turned uneasily on her bed.

"God grant it," she replied; "but he has seen our misery for many a long day, and it has made no change on him yet."

I involuntarily thought of Miss Winslow, and felt, I scarcely knew why, as if her presence in this scene of distress would have done good,—as if she must have known how to give comfort suited to the woman's state; but no Miss Winslow was at hand, and after a few more words of sympathy, we took our leave and returned home. My mind dwelt painfully, all the way, on the misery we had witnessed,

and I wondered why such sorrows were permitted. My spirit was weighed down with a sense of utter helplessness, and a weary, hopeless sort of feeling took possession of me, that everything in the world was in a wrong state, and that nothing could by any possibility ever set things right again.

CHAPTER VI

"Look here, Harriet," said Annie Gordon, running up to me with an eager and animated countenance. "What do you say to this announcement? Is it not charming? She held a printed circular in her hand, which she opened and spread out before me; "Just read this!"

"Why, what is this, Annie?" I exclaimed; " 'A course of lectures on ancient and modern history will be delivered in the town hall by James Edward Forbes, Esq.' Very charming indeed; but, Annie, I confess I did not expect *you* to be delighted with anything so purely intellectual!"

"My dear Harriet, do you actually imagine
D

I care for *that* part of the entertainment? Oh dear no! it is the delight of going where one is sure to meet all one's friends and acquaintances. And then, you know, as the lectures are to be held at two o'clock in the afternoon, it will be a fine opportunity for wearing one's best bonnet and handsomest things. *Won't* Miss Livy Bissill glory in it! I daresay she will get a new bonnet expressly for the occasion, for I am told it will be quite a distinguished affair. Mr. Forbes knows some of our neighbouring nobility, and they, as well as the gentry of the town, are expected to patronize him. Oh, I am so glad!" and Annie danced up and down the room, shaking her golden ringlets, and practising attitudes before the large mirror which hung on the opposite wall.

I laughed heartily as she spoke. "I wonder how many will go for the sake of the lectures?" I said.

"Not many," she replied; "that is to say, not if people are of my way of thinking. Ancient history indeed! Who in all the world cares to hear of the Punic wars now-a-days I should like to know! and what does it matter to our good worthy townsfolk

whether it was Julius Cæsar who killed Pompey or Pompey who killed Julius Cæsar ! I haven't an idea which did the deed, and I don't see that I would be much happier if I had ! And as to *modern* history, I am sure our grandmothers have told us enough about the Rebellion of '45 ; and we all know that Napoleon Buonaparte was a great villain, and no match for *our* Duke, so what need we more ? But that dear, good Mr. Forbes, I do so love him, for coming to give us those delightful lectures ; and for the sake of all the pleasure I expect to have, I shall not take it much amiss if he *does* bore us a little with dates and facts."

As the lively girl thus rattled on, I took up the circular again, and felt extreme pleasure as I read the plan which the lecturer purposed adopting. Annie had no sympathy with this enjoyment, and she soon left me to my own meditations, which grew brighter and brighter as I indulged them. I had never been considered much of an historian at school, but that was in a great measure owing to the system pursued there. We were *bored*, as Annie expressed it, with a series of dry facts, from which no principles were deduced ; no lessons

were drawn from the character and conduct of the celebrated individuals of whom we read, and the connection of cause and effect we were left to find out for ourselves as best we might. Our master was satisfied when we went correctly over a long list of remarkable events, and when we could tell the precise dates in which those events occurred. Our history lesson was, in fact, a mere exercise of the memory, not of the thinking or reasoning powers, and as my memory was never a very quick one, such lessons made but little impression on me, and were most dry and insipid to my taste. Mr. Forbes, however,—his prospectus at least,—held out hopes of a very different kind, and my expectations rose high as I continued to peruse the paper. He stated it to be his intention to take up the history of whatever nation should, at the time of which he was treating, bear the most prominent part in the world's history; that other nations, being subordinate, should be introduced only as their history served to develop that of the principal one, and should be dwelt upon according as their connection with it were more or less close and obvious. The first few lectures were,

therefore, to be devoted to the history of the Greeks, touching, in passing, upon that of the Egyptians and Phœnicians, to whom the Greeks were indebted for much of that knowledge which has rendered their name immortal, and which gave them so conspicuous a place among the nations of antiquity. After the Greeks came the Romans, then our own dear Britain; but, after all, it would take me too long a time to enumerate all that was in this most fascinating circular, for the syllabus of the subject-matter was long and learned.

Aunt Martha was only too glad to give her consent to my attending these lectures. For herself, she considered it a waste of time—time which at that hour of the day could ill be spared from more necessary household duties; but she willingly gave me over to the guardianship of Annie's mamma, delighted that I should have anything which promised to interest me so much. Our sad visit to Anne Mason had effectually nipped in the bud any incipient desires which had begun to spring up within me of being useful to the poor. I felt that we had *not* been useful; that aunt's words could not have been fitly spoken, since they

had failed in ministering to a mind diseased. We left the sorrowful heart as bowed down and burdened as we had found it, and this painful feeling of inability to do good had taken away from me all desire to repeat the attempt. Neither did aunt press me to return, for she probably thought that a wretched hovel where one must necessarily come in contact with filth and disease, and where one was liable to hear the coarse language of a drunkard, was no place for me ; so I contented myself with sending her such comforts as money can purchase, and then strove to banish the whole scene from my mind.

Miss Winslow's illness proved to be a fever of a most infectious character. For many weeks she hovered on the brink of the grave, and when at length she rallied, her doctor sent her to the country for change of air, and it was many months ere I saw her again. In this state of things, anything which seemed likely to prove a source of interest as well as of instruction was hailed both by my aunt and myself with great pleasure, and I commenced to attend the course with the utmost avidity.

Mr. Forbes' lectures formed a new era in my

existence. There, for the first time, I drank freely of the streams of knowledge, and felt for a time as if every desire of my being had been met; as if, having drank of *this* water, I should thirst no more. Alas for me had I been left in such a delusion! But, as I said, for a time all was bright around and within me, and I was satisfied. Finding Annie Gordon rather a troublesome neighbour at the lectures, I managed to make Mrs. Gordon sit between us, and then, when I had got comfortably ensconced in a quiet out-of-the-way corner, I gave myself up to the luxury of listening and thinking, and was only slightly disturbed by the gaily dressed assemblage of ladies around me, some of whom were nodding and smiling to their various acquaintances, while others kept up a constant under-current of whispering. Indeed so engrossed was I with the eloquence of the lecturer, that, although in the immediate vicinity of the Misses Bissill, I failed to notice them till one unfortunate day when an audible giggle from Annie, whose finger pointed at the same time to the seat before us, attracted my attention and fixed it on the person of the happy Miss Livy.

"Didn't I tell you," whispered Annie, bending across her mother to speak to me, "didn't I tell you that a new bonnet would be forthcoming for the occasion? I think *this* one surpasses all the others she has ever worn in her life."

It certainly would be difficult to find its equal; such a bonnet never greeted *my* eyes before; but then I was ignorant of the fashions, in which I never could be got to take much interest. Miss Livy's new bonnet was of pale yellow silk, dotted all over with little narrow cherry-coloured bows. The crown was high, and had a wreath of laurel leaves gracefully encircling its base; on one side was a large bow composed of innumerable small ones—like the cockade in a baby's cap—cherry-coloured and yellow, and on the other side was a large white pendent feather, tipped with yellow. Very upright she sat, never venturing to move—lest the effect should be destroyed—save, indeed, when Mr. Forbes, waxing more eloquent than usual, gave utterance to some high-toned sentiment, and then the bonnet bent low, and the long feather, tipped with yellow, gave a most solemn and effective wave. It was too

much for my gravity; lecturer and history were alike forgotten, and with an ill-concealed burst of merriment I hid my face in my pocket handkerchief, not daring to look up for the next ten minutes, greatly to Annie's delight, but much to my own provocation. This occurred at an early stage of the lectures; after that, Miss Livy happily changed her seat for a more conspicuous one, and I was left in peace.

What an intellectual treat those lectures were to me during the whole of that winter! I sat entranced as Mr. Forbes brought before us the stirring scenes of Grecian history. Had I been a man I had certainly joined Lord Byron in his attempts to aid the modern Greeks in their struggle for independence, and that from love of their noble forefathers! But girl though I was, it did not hinder me from sympathizing heartily with the ancient nation's efforts for freedom, nor from rejoicing intensely as hero after hero and patriot after patriot passed in review before us.

The lecturer began with the rude and early days of Greece, and showed us how the progress of civilization was retarded by the perpetual wars which the people waged among them-

selves, and by that isolation of the different states which prevented their having political union, and which rendered their interests independent of each other. Then, as he pursued the theme, he showed how the two republics of Sparta and Athens were formed, and dwelt especially on that which perhaps more than anything else tended to form Greece into one great nation, namely, their national religion. He spoke with a poet's love and fervour of the Greek mythology; but, carried away though I was by the first intellectual mind with which I had ever come in contact, I could not fully sympathize with him here. It seemed to me a terrible thing that men should invest Deity, not only with all the infirmities, but with the very worst sins and vices, of our depraved human nature. My fancy indeed was pleased, and my imagination excited, by the vivid descriptions of woods and streams which were peopled by the lovely creations of the Greek mind; yet I could not take in it the delight which the lecturer evidently did, and I mourned in secret over the delusions of so noble a people. After the recital of the days of her highest glory, there followed the history of her gradual

decline, and I could have wept as I listened to the tale of her corruption, her over-refinement, her loss of all public virtue, and her final subjection by the Romans.

As the course proceeded, the Romans appeared on the scene, and I soon became as enthusiastic about the deeds of the glorious old Roman republic as I had been while listening to the glowing recitals of Thermopylæ and Marathon. Still, in the midst of all this exciting enjoyment, my pleasure was damped by the thought of the fleeting nature of everything earthly. Why could not Greece and Rome, I asked myself, have gone on from one degree of greatness to another? Why must the very works which tell us of Rome's glory proclaim also its decline and fall? When goodness and virtue have reached a certain point, *must* they of necessity retrograde? These questions puzzled me. Mr. Forbes had given many philosophical reasons for all this, but none of them satisfied me; and I felt, if it be so with nations, may it not prove the same with individuals; and will not this very fear take away all desire of improvement, or if not, at least it must greatly weaken one's efforts.

Would not uncle Jacob, were he here, call this also 'vanity and vexation of spirit?'

CHAPTER VII.

THE lectures on ancient history had nevertheless been in so far of use to me that they tended to open and enlarge my mind, gave me fresh subject for thought, and imparted a great impulse to my mental exertions. Unfortunately, however, I now began to make study the chief object of my existence, and therein lay my error. Every moment that was not spent among my books I looked upon as lost. Morning, noon, and night, I was occupied in reading; but, having no judicious friend at hand to guide me in the choice, my studies were more varied and desultory than profitable. History, poetry, philosophy, novels, and theology, were all seized upon indiscriminately, and read with eager delight.

Aunt Martha could no longer get me to work and chat beside her as in former days; and as for attempting to initiate me into the mysteries of housekeeping, that was quite out

of the question. At first she was a little angry, but her displeasure against me never lasted long. She was a most indulgent aunt; indeed she had always given me too much of my own way, so that I was in fact little better than a spoilt child, and did not submit willingly to being thwarted. My little cousin Grace attended a day-school, and the only really useful thing I did for my dear aunt, at this time, was devoting an hour in the evenings to helping the child in preparing her lessons for the ensuing day.

Annie Gordon's indignation with me was extreme. She declared I had become utterly good for nothing; that it was but rarely now-a-days that I would favour her with my company, and that even when she *did* succeed in dragging me from those odious books, and got me to take a walk with her, I did not seem to pay the least attention to what she said to me, did not care where we went, and was even indifferent to meeting our friends and acquaintances in the course of our promenades! She vowed she would never forgive Mr. Forbes for having caused such a change. Before he began those detestable lectures, (Annie quite forgot

that it was she who had first told me of them,) I had been like other girls, lively and agreeable, and not above conversing with my companions; but that now I was a grave, tiresome old thing, a perfect blue-stocking, in fact, and if there was one thing more than another which she particularly disliked, it was a blue-stocking, so I might remember that she had warned me in time. These were serious charges of Annie's, and I could not but admit that *some* of them were true, so I laughingly thanked her for her warning, but told her at the same time that she need not be in the least afraid of my becoming a blue-stocking, for that I disliked the character as much as she did; "Besides," I added, "blue-stockings are very conceited individuals, and think they know a great deal; but it is because I feel my own ignorance so deeply that I am so anxious to learn, and I cannot become conceited for a long time to come, since I fear it will be a long time before I shall know anything to be conceited about!"

"Nonsense," she said; "if I knew as much as you do, Harriet, I would be extremely conceited."

"No, you would not," I replied; "for, taking

for granted that I know much,—which I do not,—yet I think that the more one knows the more humble one gets, because—”

“ Well, well,” she said, interrupting me somewhat impatiently, “ I don’t want to know anything more about the matter; I am quite contented with my own ignorance, and wish you would be the same with your learning; so now put on your bonnet, like a good girl, and let us have a walk,—just look how the sun is shining!”

Anxious to please her, and convince her that I was no blue-stocking, I was about to quit the room, to prepare for our walk, when she suddenly said, “ Harriet, I happened to open a book yesterday, and my eye fell on a sentence somewhat to this effect, ‘ There is a great difference between learning and wisdom; a person may possess much of the former and yet have very little of the latter.’ Now don’t you think this is *rather* applicable to you? Nobody can look at the ponderous tomes you have read through during this last winter, and not be convinced that you have a great deal of *learning*; but I feel inclined to doubt your *wisdom* when I see you wasting your time and spoiling

your complexion poring through musty volumes over the fire, instead of amusing yourself like other girls of your age."

I made a hasty retreat, for Annie's words spoken at random startled me. Not that I cared much for *her* reasonings; she was too little given to think for her opinions to have much weight with me; but what she had said about the difference between learning and wisdom struck me forcibly, and I pondered it in my heart many a day afterwards.

When I came back equipped for walking, Annie was all smiles.

"It would have been a disgrace to have lost this lovely spring morning," she said; "and as a reward for your obliging acquiescence, I shall repeat poetry to you as we go along;" and she put her arm within mine and drew me out into the sunshine, repeating with a mock heroic air as we walked along,

"Come, gentle spring,
Ethereal mildness come!"

During our walk I made another attempt to interest Annie in my pursuits, but in vain.

"I hate reading," she said, "and I don't know what use it is of to women, except to make

them pedants; besides, I have no time for it, so it is no use saying anything more on the subject."

"But Annie," said I, "how do you employ your time?"

"Oh, in fifty ways! I play the pianoforte and sing. I dance and do Berlin worsted-work; then I walk and make calls on my friends; and, in short, I can't tell you all I do, but I assure you I am never idle."

"And never tired of your life?" I asked, looking somewhat anxiously at her as I spoke.

Annie laughed unmercifully as I said these words, so much so that I felt a little angry with her.

"Tired of my life!" she exclaimed; "why my life has scarcely begun yet: indeed it won't *really* begin till next winter, when I shall be eighteen; and then, you know, mamma has promised that I am to come out. Oh what pleasure I expect!" and her large dark eyes sparkled in anticipation.

"And, in the meantime," said I, "are you never dull? Do you never feel the want of something to *satisfy* you?"

"Oh, as to that, Harriet, I am dull enough on a bad day, when I can't go out, and nobody

comes to call; and I am dull enough on Sundays, when I am forced to listen to Mr. Blackwood's long, prosy sermons: but on such occasions (not on Sundays, though) I amuse myself with a novel; or, if I happen to be in a particularly good frame of mind, I mend my clothes, and then mamma is so pleased, and praises me, and that gives me a comfortable, satisfied sort of feeling."

As Annie said this, I thought of the hours I once used to spend in working with my dear kind aunt Martha, and my conscience smote me a little, and I began to feel that perhaps my excessive devotion to reading had a good deal of selfishness in it.

"Then you are quite happy, Annie?"

"Yes, quite," she replied; "why should I not be so? I am young and healthy; not bad looking either, at least so people say; and I am to come out next winter." Her step quickened almost into a dance as she spoke.

I was silent for a while, and then I said, "But, Annie, perhaps you will not always have good health; sickness may come, and what will you do then? and you know that *youth* cannot always last."

"Oh, as to that, when I am sick I shall send for the doctor, and hope to get soon well again : and as to turning old, I fancy one gets used to that, it comes so gradually, though I must say it is a shocking thing to have to look forward to; but then, you know, I shall have my husband and children to take care of me, when those things happen ; and when I am getting old I shall have my house to look after, —mamma finds great pleasure in taking care of her house. Only think, Harriet, how pleasant it must be to have a house of one's own ; Anna Dunlop is so happy just now, for she and her intended do nothing all day but talk about their new house, and are ordering, you can't think how much beautiful furniture for it. Don't you long to be married, Harriet ?"

"For the sake of ordering beautiful furniture, do you mean?" I said, smiling. "Why, to tell you the truth, I have never thought much about it ; but perhaps neither you nor I will ever be married, and what will you do then?"

"Never be married !" she repeated ; "my dear girl, what an idea ! Do you actually think that I shall be an old maid ?"

"Others are so," I replied ; "but I am only

years and infirmities, you can expect to have."

"Advanced years and infirmities!" she said ;—" what a queer girl you are to be sure! Well, in that case, I would make flannel petticoats for the poor; and when tired of that, I would take to reading novels,—luckily *they* don't require much energy of mind to enable one to understand them. But really, Harriet, you are infecting me with the dismal by your dreadful suppositions: I do wish you would not talk so: it is as bad as nightmare every bit; indeed it is, so you need not smile; you know perfectly well that two pretty girls like you and me are *sure* to get husbands, so why will you torment me by fancying that we are to be old maids!"

"One question more, dear Annie, and then we shall change the subject. Supposing you to be an old maid—forgive me, I have just done—what will you do when you come to die, and when you look back on the way you have spent your life;—in your youth, playing, singing, and fancy-work; and in later years, talking scandal and reading novels? What will you say to God about it when you appear before him?"

The gay young countenance of my companion grew very grave at this, graver than I had ever seen it before. She remained silent for a few minutes, and then suddenly looked up at me with an expression half earnest, half arch, and said,—

“Tell me, Harriet, when you also are on your death-bed, and take a review of your past life, do you think it will appear much better than mine? Granting that I spend mine in pleasing myself by dancing and novel-reading, is not your life spent equally in self-pleasing? for you don’t mean to say that in neglecting all your home and social duties you are living for others; or that your graver studies are not as much centred in self as my more trivial ones are! Answer me *that* if you can, my little Mentor!”

I was cut to the heart, and felt that in thus speaking to Annie, it was indeed the blind leading the blind. I was, however, saved the embarrassment of a reply by two young ladies of our acquaintance at that moment coming up to us, and the next instant we were all busily engaged in giving utterance to those thousand nothings which occasionally employ

the thoughts and tongues of very young ladies when they happen to meet at promenades during the fashionable hour for walking.

When they left us, Annie said she must return home now, and bidding me rather a hasty adieu, as if she feared any renewal of our previous conversation, she left me to pursue my way home alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

"My dear Harriet," said aunt, on my return, "I wish you would write a note for me, asking the Misses Bissill to drink tea with us to-morrow. They have not been here for a long time now, and I am afraid they will be offended if we do not ask them."

At any other time I would have besought aunt, if not to put off altogether, at least to delay this necessary evil of having the Misses Bissill at tea; but just then Annie's words about the selfishness of my way of life were fresh in my memory, and during my walk home I had made a solemn mental resolution to amend; so instead of making any

objections, I sat down at my desk with alacrity, glorying, as I penned the note, in this little act of self-denial.

"Don't you think we had better ask Mrs. Gordon and Annie, also?" said aunt.

"Oh, yes," I replied, "let me write a note to them."

"And Mr. Blackwood?" she continued, hesitatingly.

"Mr. Blackwood, aunt? is it *quite* necessary to have him?"

"Why, yes, Harriet; you know he is our own minister, and it is right to pay him some attention now and then."

"Very well," I said, with a sigh, and the third note was written and despatched along with the others. Perhaps he may be engaged elsewhere, I said to myself: but no, a polite note of acceptance was sent the same evening, and our other friends also accepted; so I made up my mind to desert my books for one evening, and help aunt to entertain our guests with as much suavity as I could possibly muster.

The next morning the sky was very dark, and soon after breakfast it began to rain, a slow, drizzly rain, which looked as if it must

go on for a week at least before it could effect much in emptying the mass of clouds overhead. I was quite pleased. *Now*, I thought, I shall have a famous day of reading ; we are sure of being free from callers *this* morning, and I shall make up for the time which must be lost in the evening. But just as I had settled myself snugly in the corner of the sofa, with a large volume of Gibbon on my knee, and two or three others scattered around me, aunt Martha popped in her head at the door, and said,—

“ I am going to make knead-cakes, Harriet ; I do wish you would put away your books for once, and come and see how I do them. I am very anxious you should learn to make them nicely ; when you have a house of your own, you will find the comfort of knowing all those little things.”

I felt annoyed for a minute ; but, remembering my resolution, I arose and put away my books.

“ Very well, dear aunt, let us to work ; but I fear you will not find me a pupil to do you much credit.”

“ Everything must have a beginning,” she

replied, as she proceeded to the kitchen. "The first knead-cakes I made were *very* tough indeed ; and as for my first attempt at pie crust ! I wish you had only seen how my brothers laughed at it ! My little midshipman brother, Charlie, had just returned from a cruise at sea, and that day at dinner he was much delighted at the sight of the large apple-tart which I had made for the occasion, and which I gazed on with such fondness, thinking, in the pride of my heart, that since it *looked* so well, it would *taste* much better."

"And how did it taste?" I asked, laughing.

Aunt shook her head. "Ah, my dear, my pride had a sad fall ! The crust was so hard that no knife could cut it, so we had to break it into pieces by main force. Charlie said it lasted him instead of cabin biscuit for a week afterwards. I had forgotten, too, to put in any salt ; so you may fancy what an affair it was !"

"I don't think, aunt, that I should ever have had courage to try another, after so signal a failure."

"Then, my dear, you would have been very foolish. Nothing can ever be attained in

this world without courage and perseverance. 'Try again,' was my dear mother's motto ; I made it mine too, and I have never found it fail. Had I given up at the first, second, ay, or even at the third attempt, you would never have tasted any of those pies and tarts which you are so fond of, Harriet, and which you pronounce so excellent."

"Indeed that is very true," I said ; and as your pastry is *particularly* good, I am very glad you had courage to persevere."

All this time aunt was not idle. She put on a large apron, set the beautifully white baking board on a table before her, and, while the maid placed a can of flour and a jug of water beside her, she began to spoon some of the fine fresh butter, which was the churning of our own dairy. I stood beside her and watched how skilfully she mixed the ingredients, and how daintily she rolled out the soft paste. Then she took up a little notched wheel with which she cut the paste into small oblong squares. The girdle was now put on the clear, gently-burning fire, and after aunt had covered it with the little cakes, she stood watching and turning them till they were of a

delicate brown, when they were instantly taken off, and placed standing up in rows along the outer edge of the baking board: Certainly aunt's knead-cakes *were* excellent (but so was everything she put her hand to); they quite melted away in one's mouth, and had this peculiar quality about them, that the first invariably produced a longing desire for a second! The baking operation having come to a satisfactory termination, we proceeded to the store-room, where aunt cut up a large cake, which she gave to me to pile up on two old-fashioned china plates, on which were depicted groups of happy lovers sitting under the shade of strange trees, the name or genus of which would have sadly puzzled a naturalist to declare; and right over the tops of those trees were men in boats, sailing on a grand river; the *tout-ensemble* exhibiting that interesting absence of perspective for which the Chinese are so famous. Then we poured rich cream into old silver jugs which had belonged to aunt's great-grandfather; cunning little things they were, looking quite small and modest, all the time that they held double the quantity which their modern successors of the same apparent size do! They were

mounted on three crooked little legs, and were perfectly unique of their kind. Next, we put jams and jellies of every description into quaintly cut crystal dishes; and then, quite satisfied with the result of our labours, returned to the drawing-room, where I sat down with redoubled zest to my studies, and aunt took out her work-bag and began to stitch busily.

Towards evening it cleared up, and exactly at five minutes past six (Miss Livy liked to be a *little* fashionably late), Miss Bissill's energetic ring was heard. In a short time our whole party had assembled, and we sat down to tea. Mr. Blackwood and Miss Livy were seated next each other, and kept up a brisk conversation on a variety of subjects. Annie and I watched them and found much amusement in listening to their conversation, which we enlivened from time to time by edifying remarks of our own. Miss Bissill was meantime holding a learned discussion with Mrs. Gordon upon the respective ways of making gooseberry wine taste like champagne; while my aunt, assisted by the busy, happy, little Grace, never ceased doing the honours of the table in true old-fashioned style,

hospitably pressing the good cheer upon her guests.

"What a remarkably bad day this has been, Miss Olivia," said Mr. Blackwood to his fair neighbour, helping himself to half-a-dozen knead-cakes as he spoke; "I am sure you must have felt it very dull."

"Indeed you are right there, Mr. Blackwood," she replied; "and after such a fine day as we had yesterday! It is very extraordinary that we should have sunshine yesterday and rain to-day; I don't understand it at all." Miss Livy looked quite bewildered as she made this meteorological remark.

"There is no accounting for the vagaries of a Scottish climate, Miss Olivia. I consider it quite like a picture of life; one thing to-day, another thing to-morrow."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Blackwood, just as you say; quite a picture. I am sure I don't know what I should have done all to-day if it had not been for Miss Margaret Yellowlees. Judith was busy making out her accounts, and I could not get a single word out of her; but Miss Margaret, as I said, came in. She just put on her pattens, and took her old umbrella, and came over, as

she said, to have a chat, and to help me to settle what to wear at Miss Dunlop's wedding."

"A most important point for ladies *that*, Miss Olivia."

"Which, sir," said Annie; "the dress or the wedding?"

Mr. Blackwood laughed at this question, and his large rosy face looked rosier than ever as he turned to Miss Livy, and said, "I shall leave this question for *you* to answer, Miss Olivia. Which do you think the more important,—the dress or the wedding?"

Miss Livy did not seem at all sure; at length she replied, "Well, I fancy the wedding is the most important thing to the bridegroom, for that is almost all he has to think about; but certainly the dress is the great matter for the bride and all the ladies present. At a wedding everybody looks to see how her neighbour is dressed, and—"

"And very right, too," interrupted Mr. Blackwood.

"I'm very glad to hear you say so, sir; that is a most sensible speech of yours. I *do* think it is a most important thing how one is dressed at a wedding."

"What do you mean to wear at it, Miss Livy?" asked Annie, with a grave, demure-looking face.

"Why, to say truth, Miss Annie, I have not quite fixed."

"Not fixed!" repeated Annie, with a look of dismay. "Oh! Miss Livy, you must be quick about it, for you know it is to take place on the 12th and this is the 4th."

Miss Livy's face grew quite anxious as she replied, "That is just what I was saying to Judith this very day; but she only said, 'Oh, sister, never mind, there is time enough; besides, nobody will notice what *you* wear.' You know she meant that as I am not the bride, it won't so much matter."

"What a cruel speech of your sister's!" said Mr. Blackwood. "Although you are not the bride *this* time, yet many persons will notice what you have on. I know of *one* at least who will."

The latter part of this speech was said rather in an under tone, and Miss Livy blushed and simpered as she heard it.

"I think *everybody* will notice you, Miss Livy," said Annie.

"Annie, Annie," I whispered, "for pity's sake don't speak so; even Miss Livy will find out that you are laughing at her." But Annie went on without listening to me in the least.

"Well now, Miss Livy, but what *do* you mean to wear; for, after all, you *must* have thought of something or other?"

"Well," she replied, "Miss Yellowlees wants me to wear white muslin over yellow silk; which, she says, will look like white by gas light."

"Very true," remarked Mr. Blackwood; "and very pretty and bride-like it will look, Miss Olivia."

"Sister," said Miss Bissill's sharp voice across the table, "don't let Mr. Blackwood persuade you to make a fool of yourself."

Miss Livy looked somewhat crest-fallen at this, while Mr. Blackwood, bowing across to Miss Bissill, exclaimed, "With Miss Bissill's strong good sense, there is no fear of such a catastrophe."

Miss Bissill deigned no reply, and her sister went on: "What *I* thought of wearing was my crimson satin, trimmed round the foot with green satin ribbon, and with a new polka

over it of net or pale green muslin ; but Miss Yellowlees says that would not be quite the thing."

"I don't think it would," I ventured to remark, striving at the same time to divert Miss Livy's attention from Annie, whose risible organs were fast becoming too palpably excited. "Don't you think the crimson dress would be fine enough *without* the polka and the trimming?"

"Certainly not," she replied. "You know nothing of these things, my dear Miss Harriet, or you would not say so ; one must have something finer for a wedding than one wears on ordinary occasions. Don't you think so, Mr. Blackwood?"

"Certainly, ma'am," he replied. "For my part I don't think a lady *can* be too fine at a wedding."

"Well, then," I continued, "can't you wear a polka of the same colour as your dress?" but Miss Livy's partiality for mixtures was not to be so easily overcome.

"But," began Annie again, "if you make yourself so fine at Miss Dunlop's marriage, what will you wear at your own?"

"Oh!" she replied, blushing, and looking down, "as to that, there will be no difficulty *then*, because, as a matter of course, I shall wear white lace over white satin, with a wreath of orange flowers."

"Round your cap, I suppose?" said Annie.

This allusion to her wearing anything so unbride-like as a cap, did not seem to please Miss Livy at all, for she answered rather sharply, "No, not *round* my cap, Miss Annie, but in the border instead of flowers."

"Those young ladies seem to think that no one has a right to marry but themselves," said Mr. Blackwood; "but *we*, Miss Olivia, who have come to years of discretion, know better; don't we?"

Miss Livy did not seem to know whether this speech was meant as a compliment or the reverse, but she replied, "Certainly, sir, we know what is fitting a great deal better than *children* do."

"How good-natured it is of the Dunlops to invite them to the marriage, considering the way they used to speak of Edward," I said to Annie, *sotto voce*, when Miss Livy and Mr. Blackwood were once more engrossed in conversation.

"Why, how stupid you are, Harriet! It was not good nature at all; it was solely to save themselves from Miss Bissill's tongue that made them ask them: Anna herself told me so; and besides, Edward says it is such fun to see Miss Livy's dress, and to hear her talk, that he would not have her left out for anything."

It did not strike me as being very amiable, to invite people to one's house on purpose to laugh at them; but I said nothing, for I felt that I had myself often laughed at Miss Livy more than was right.

We had scarcely finished tea, when a carriage, stopping at our little garden gate, drew our attention to the window. The road near which our house stood was the high road leading to Glasgow, and the stage coach to and from that city passed by twice a week.

"There is the stage coach from Glasgow, and stopping here, I declare!" exclaimed aunt; "who *can* it be?"

"Who *can* it be?" reiterated Miss Livy, holding up her eye-glass.

"Time will show," said Mr. Blackwood, swallowing down a whole knead-cake—the last one—as he spoke.

The guard sprang down, opened the coach door, and out came a little spare figure of an old gentleman, who drew a dark green tartan cloak, of scanty proportions, closely around him as he stepped on to the large stone at our gate. Well did I know that old tartan cloak! and before any one had time to speak, an amazed and a not quite joyful exclamation of "Uncle Jacob!" burst from my lips.

CHAPTER IX.

YES, it was indeed uncle Jacob *in propria persona*.

"Run down, Harriet," said aunt Martha; "run down stairs quickly to welcome your uncle:" and down stairs I ran, in time to receive him before the servant had made her appearance.

"Well, child, how do you do?" said he, putting a thin hard hand into mine, with a faint attempt at a shake. "I hope your aunt is in, and that you have no company."

"We have some friends at tea," I replied; "but never mind, they will all be glad to see you, uncle."

"That may be," said he, "but *I* shall not be glad to see *them*. What in the world possesses your aunt to be always giving tea parties!"

"Please, sir," said a little boy, who was standing patiently holding my uncle's carpet-bag in his hand; "Please, sir, where shall I put the bag?"

"That means, I fancy, that you want to be paid for your trouble? Well, I suppose it must be: here, take this," and he put a half-penny into his hand. But the boy looked dissatisfied. "Please, sir," he said, "it's a heavy bag."

"A heavy bag, you little rascal! and how far have you carried it, I wonder! from the garden gate to the house door, just three yards exactly; but you are all alike, a pack of cheating scoundrels. One had need to be made of gold to satisfy you."

As he spoke, uncle's voice waxed shrill and loud. In terror lest he should be heard up stairs, I slipped a penny into the boy's hand, and taking the bag from him drew my uncle in and shut the door.

"Are they womenkind you have at tea?" he asked, as I escorted him to his room.

"Yes, uncle; there are four ladies and a gentleman."

"*Four* ladies!" he exclaimed in horror; "do you think I am going to face *four* women-kind? I am sure your aunt knows by this time that they are my very abhorrence; what for did she go and ask them?"

"We did not know you were coming, uncle."

"Fiddlesticks," he said, testily; "go and tell your aunt that she may send me a cup of tea to my own room. Four womenkind indeed!"

"But, uncle," I ventured to remark, "they are not strangers to you; they are all old acquaintances. Mr. Blackwood, our minister, you know him well."

"Yes, there are worse men than Mr. Blackwood," he said, apparently a little mollified; "but these womenkind, who are they?"

"Mrs. Gordon, and her daughter Annie."

"Well, well, Mrs. Gordon is a sensible woman enough, if she did but know better how to guide her affairs; but she is thriftless, child, thriftless, thriftless. And who are the others?"

I hesitated a little.

"Eh?" he said; "why don't ye speak, lassie?"

"Only Miss Bissill, and her sister," I ventured to say; but no sooner were the words uttered than I saw that all attempts to allure uncle Jacob into the drawing-room would be utterly in vain.

"Miss Bissill!" he shrieked out, "Miss Bissill! why, I would rather face a regiment of dragoons, or a whole host of duns when I had not a penny in my pocket, than meet that woman! And that idiot, Miss Livy! What possessed me to come here, when I might have known that it would turn out nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit! Niece, niece, if it weren't that I have no servant at home, I would e'en return to Glasgow this very night."

"No servant!" I exclaimed, anxious to turn his attention from the thought of Miss Bissill; "how is that, uncle? What has become of old Peggie?"

"Sick, and gone home for a month," and his thin sallow face looked gloomy as November as he spoke.

"Poor Peggie!" I said, "I am sorry to hear it."

"You may keep your sorrow for those who deserve it," he said, shortly; "it is my firm belief that Peggie over-ate herself, and so got ill. She deserved to be sick, and I told her so; but you are all alike, you womenkind, perfect idiots, every one of you."

"Thank you, uncle," said I, making him a low courtesy, "much obliged for the compliment;" and, having made this bold speech, I effected a hasty retreat, smiling, as I went to the drawing-room, at the very idea of any one being able to over-eat himself in uncle Jacob's house.

"Well," said aunt Martha, "is your uncle coming?"

"No, aunt," I replied, "he won't come."

"And why not?"

"Because, because," and seeing that I looked somewhat confused, aunt begged our guests to excuse her for a moment, and hastened out of the room. What sort of eloquence she made use of I don't know; but whatever it was it succeeded, for in a short time she reappeared, accompanied by my uncle, on whose face there still rested some traces of the indignation he felt in being obliged to face no less than *four*

of the gentle sex. He behaved very well, however; and, being judiciously placed by aunt Martha, near Mr. Blackwood, and at a respectful distance from Miss Bissill, he gradually recovered the modicum of good humour that had fallen to his lot; and, after making a scanty tea, was soon quite at his ease. He entertained the whole party with Glasgow news, and, having a vein of dry sarcastic humour, his accounts of recent events, and his delineations of character, as he described social life in Glasgow, made his conversation most amusing; yet it pained me to see the bitter feeling which evidently prompted many of his remarks, and the absorbing interest he manifested when talking of money matters. I looked with sorrow on the wrinkled face of the old man, whose hold of the things on which he had set his heart must so soon be loosened, and that too for ever.

Our guests left us at an earlier hour than usual; and, when we were alone, uncle informed aunt Martha that being deprived for a time of the services of his old and only servant, he had come to stay with us during her absence, should it be convenient for her to receive him.

Of course aunt made him most welcome, and having done everything in her power to make him comfortable and feel at home, she escorted him to his room, and left him to repose.

Uncle Jacob was already in the breakfast parlour when, at an early hour the next morning, I went down stairs. I found him engaged in reading a letter. He looked up as I entered:

"Good morning, niece; come and read this word for me, I can't make it out; something has come over these rascally spectacles of mine." He wiped them impatiently as he spoke, and then held out the letter, his finger resting on the illegible word. I looked at it, but it might have been Hebrew for all I could make of it.

"I can't read it, uncle," I said; and as my eye glanced over the page, I saw that it was written in a foreign-looking language—German, I thought. "It is surely German, uncle?"

"Of course it is German," he replied, testily; "you surely don't mean to say that you don't understand German?"

"Indeed I am sorry to say I do not; no one in all the town knows it, I believe; and I have no German books, else I would gladly have learnt it."

"But they told me you were a great book-worm, niece."

"I am very fond of reading, indeed, uncle."

"Then what in the world did you not buy German books for, and teach yourself? Of what use is all that trash?" And he pointed to my book-case, which, from its disarranged condition, had, I perceived, undergone his inspection.

Uncle Jacob had been a Hamburg and Glasgow merchant, and having spent many years in the former city, its language was almost as familiar to him as his own. He had made a large fortune in early life by some successful speculations; but a series of reverses had almost as suddenly deprived him of it, and he was forced to recommence life with very limited resources, and with a spirit imbittered not only by pecuniary losses, but by a disappointment in love. He became henceforth a plodding man of business, at his desk early and late, carefully abstaining from speculations of every kind, and holding with the iron grasp of avarice every penny he made, barely allowing himself the necessities of life, and flying from the sight of women as if there were con-

tamination in their very vicinity. Poor uncle Jacob! I did not wonder so much at his feelings towards the fair sex, after aunt had given me his history, and told me how the young lady to whom he was engaged had, in the most callous way, given him up as soon as his pecuniary losses were made known.

I had to listen to a long lecture on the folly of having wasted my time in studying such books as history and poetry, when I might have been learning the language of a country with which, said uncle Jacob, "we have commercial relations, and so are able to make money." As I had no intention of becoming a Hamburg merchant, I did not think our commercial relations with it concerned me much; but I knew that its literature was a very rich one, and, eager to have a key to this mine, I replied, "Uncle Jacob, if you will give me lessons in German whilst you are here, I promise to study hard, and am sure I shall soon be able to read it."

"I give you lessons, lassie! are ye daft?"

"Why not?" I urged; "you can read and speak it quite well."

"That may be true enough; but when I

began to learn German, I had to study grammar, and to write exercises, and how can you expect an old man like me to be troubling himself about things like these?"

"Oh, as to the grammar," I said, laughing, "never mind that; if you will only teach me to read and speak, I shall manage the exercises by myself by-and-by. Come, uncle, I added coaxingly, "*do* say you will teach me."

As he had by this time made out the word which had puzzled him, and discovered that the letter gave him various pieces of information which afforded him pleasure, I at length succeeded in extorting a sort of promise that, if I could manage to borrow books, he would try what he could do. After many fruitless efforts, I was at last fortunate enough to find an old dictionary at our bookseller's, and a second-hand copy of Schiller's "*William Tell*," which a poor student going to college had exchanged with the bookseller for a Latin grammar. Aided by these, I began and carried on my studies with an ardour which, in the end, inspired uncle Jacob with something of its own energy; and in course of time I was able to read tolerably well, and even to carry on a

conversation with my uncle, who seemed pleased to revive his old recollections of Germany, and told me many an anecdote of his boyish days while living there, and many a description of Hamburg and its enormous wealth and luxury; but he generally summed it all up with his usual "What's the use of all that? Isn't it all vanity and vexation of spirit?"

Poor old Peggie, instead of getting better, grew worse; and one day, when uncle had been about two months with us, a letter came announcing her death. Uncle Jacob was much affected by the tidings. I had, till then, no idea that he possessed any feeling; he had never shown much; but the discovery that a heart existed beneath that dry, hard exterior, drew me towards him, and made me exert myself to please him in every way. Wretched at the idea of having a stranger in his little *menage* in Glasgow, it was not difficult for aunt to persuade him to put off the evil day, and prolong his stay with us. He no longer carried on business, being too old and frail for that, so he consented to remain, after extracting a promise from aunt Martha that she

would not invite "that idiot, Miss Livy Bissill," or her sister, to tea oftener than once a fortnight.

If Annie Gordon's indignation had been excited by my devotion to the lectures on history, it was no less so by what she termed my insane craze for learning German. Certainly there was some truth in this, for I abandoned all my other studies, and gave myself up to this new one with a degree of enthusiasm which, both to my aunt and Annie, was quite incomprehensible, and not in their eyes at all worthy of the nature of the pursuit. But this was quite in accordance with my character. I could do nothing by halves: whatever I was engaged in, I pursued with the whole energy of my being; mind and heart being entirely absorbed by it: though I must confess that steadiness of purpose was wanting; and an occupation which, for a time, had power to absorb my whole attention, was too often abandoned for another that had struck my fancy, and which, in its turn, was liable to give way to another. True, I had found nothing as yet which could fill my whole soul, which may partly account for this impulsive changefulness; still, it was a fault in

my character, and one which gave me much trouble in after-life, even after I had drunk of those streams of which it is written, "Who-soever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." But I must not anticipate. So much labour brought forth its fruit in due season, and the treasures for which I had sighed were at length placed in my eager grasp. I sent to Edinburgh for a supply of books, and when a complete set of Schiller's works was put into my hands, it was as if a new star had suddenly appeared in my sky, and, in my delighted satisfaction, I deemed it a sun, and promised myself a lifetime's enjoyment of its brilliant light. The first thing I read was "Wallenstein," and the character of Thecla won its way into my imagination. I wept over her fate, and that of her youthful lover, with many tears, while her image perpetually haunted me; and I went about repeating those lines of the song in which she pours forth her sorrows: "Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück, Ich habe gelebt und geliebet"—

"The joys of earth my soul hath proved,
For I have lived and I have loved."

"Well, Harriet, I hope you are happy now!"
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exclaimed my friend Annie, somewhat sarcastically, as she came upon me one day when I was spouting aloud "The song of the bell." "Quite," I replied, a little taken aback at being caught: "do let me read this poem to you; I can translate it easily; listen:" but Annie put her hands up to her ears, and made a face which caused me to throw down the book. "You are not worthy of—"

"I am thankful to say I am not," she interrupted, laughing; "but come now, tell me when your uncle Jacob is going away?"

"Next week," I said; "he has got a niece of his old Peggie to be his servant, so he won't stay with us any longer."

"I am very glad to hear it," she replied; "we shall now be able to have some pleasant parties. Your aunt, you know, has promised to give us a dance as soon as Mr. Russel shall be gone. I want so much to begin and practise for Lady Macgregor's ball."

"When does it take place?" I asked.

"Harriet, Harriet, how *can* you ask such a question? Are not you to be introduced then as well as myself?"

"Aunt Martha wishes me to be so," I said;

but I would much rather not. I never liked dancing, and I can't imagine what the pleasure of a ball is. What do you mean to do when you go?"

Annie's light-hearted laugh rang through the room at this question. "I mean to look as lovely as possible," she replied, "dance every dance, and enjoy myself excessively. I suppose *you* mean to sit in a corner, and make philosophical remarks on the rest of the company?"

"I should certainly prefer being an onlooker to an actor in the scene," I answered, yawning; but, in course of time, Annie's description of what the party was likely to be, the brilliant lights, the music, and the gay dresses, made me, in spite of myself, begin to take an interest in it; and when, after uncle Jacob's departure, we gave a dance to a number of our acquaintances, I actually went through a quadrille to Annie's entire satisfaction. German did not lose its interest in my eyes; but when volume after volume had been devoured, and poems innumerable committed to memory, I was grieved and surprised to find that there still remained in the recesses of my soul a void

which neither German nor any other study could fill, and which, like the horse-leech of which the prophet speaks, was ever crying out, in its unsatisfied cravings, "Give, give."

CHAPTER X.

THE evening so ardently desired by Annie Gordon at length arrived—that evening when she and I were to make our *debut*. This ball was looked upon as a most important affair, and the mammas of all the presentable young ladies of our little town considered it a very fortunate circumstance that Lady Macgregor, the widow of a distinguished officer, should have come to reside amongst us just at this important crisis of our lives. She was looked up to as a model of fashion and elegance; and to have made her *debut* at Lady Macgregor's was quite enough to insure any young girl's success. I was now eighteen years of age, and my friend Annie a few months older. She was a very pretty girl, and our friends were pleased to consider me so also. We were termed by general consent

the belles of the neighbourhood, and our first appearance in public was looked forward to with a good deal of interest.

It was arranged that we should go together; and accordingly, about half an hour before the time, Mrs. Gordon and her daughter, in most beautiful costume, were ushered into our drawing-room.

"How does my dress do, and how do I look, Harriet?" exclaimed Annie, throwing off the large shawl in which she was enveloped, and standing before me with an air half saucy, half shy."

"Most charming!" burst from my lips, as I surveyed the pretty, fairy-like being.

She was certainly a lovely little creature. Her slight figure was seen to advantage in a dress of transparent muslin over white silk. The folds of the muslin seemed to float around her as she moved; and her golden ringlets and laughing blue eyes beamed forth like the sun peering through a vapoury cloud. Her face, when in repose, had not much expression; but you did not seem to feel conscious of this when, lighted up by animation, her eyes laughed at you, and her cheeks glowed with

the softest, loveliest pink. No child could look more sweet and artless than Annie did, when pleased and dressed for a party; and the eye resting on a loveliness that rivalled that of the opening rose, sought for nothing more.

"So you are pleased," she said, blushing and smiling. "Well, I am glad of that. *Your* appearance pleases me too; only I think you should have put an ornament in these black locks of yours, instead of a simple white rose. However, with your intellectual countenance, 'severe in its Grecian beauty,' as Mr. Forbes would say, I have no doubt you will do execution."

"Don't talk so much nonsense, Annie," said her mother; but aunt Martha would not allow her to be scolded. Her eye, wandering from Annie, rested with a well-pleased expression on me, and, with a fond, admiring smile she said, "Let them enjoy themselves, and be as foolish as they like, the dear bairns; when I was their age I felt just the same. It is all natural and as it should be; they will get sense by-and-by."

I did not much relish this implied want of sense; but there was no time to argue the

point, for the carriage waited to take us to our destination; and with feelings of mingled pleasure and dread I took my place beside Annie, and we drove off.

On entering the large drawing-room at Lady Macgregor's, the scene which presented itself seemed almost magical in my eyes. Brilliant lights were in every quarter, gleaming amid bouquets of the most exquisite hot-house plants; while groups of beautifully dressed ladies, and officers in gay scarlet uniforms and gold epaulets, were moving up and down—strains of liveliest music adding to the gaiety of the scene.

Lady Macgregor received us most graciously, and after addressing to us a few flattering speeches about the pleasure she felt in introducing two such young ladies into society, she turned away to receive her other guests, leaving us to be led off to join the dancers by two very fashionable-looking young officers.

My partner was a very young man, with a silly expression of countenance, and an effeminacy of appearance which was increased by a disagreeable lisp.

I should soon have tired of such a partner,

had it not been that everything was new to me; and I was so occupied in watching the groups around, that I did not hear one-half of the speeches he made me. Dance succeeded dance, and for the first hour or two I enjoyed myself very much. My partners amused me by their remarks on balls and parties; the music was pleasing; and when I grew wearied with dancing, I sat down for a little beside aunt, and was for a time still more amused by looking at the other dancers, and watching the various expressions of countenance visible among the actors of the gay throng. But after a time I began to tire of the scene. I was obliged to dance again, and the speeches addressed to me by my partners seemed to become very frivolous, and to have more of bare-faced flattery in them than was pleasing to my sense of good breeding.

At length I was suffered to resume my seat, and was quite relieved when aunt Martha proposed returning home. Annie looked prettier and even more excited than when the ball began. She was in despair at having to go away so early, and could not understand why I should have pale cheeks and yawn; but the

recital of her enjoyments and triumphs kept her in constant talk as we drove home, and I was suffered to say good night without a greater scold than her saying that she hoped I would behave better next time, and not force her to leave a ball at such a ridiculous hour as one o'clock in the morning.

The next ball I went to pleased me still less than the former one had done; and as party succeeded party, I grew quite impatient, and told aunt Martha that if this were life,—as Annie Gordon declared it to be,—I was more weary of it than I ever had been before.

"But what would you have?" asked Annie one day, as I was beseeching aunt to allow me to refuse an invitation to a large dancing party. "What would you have? Are you not greatly admired, and constantly engaged for every dance?"

"Admiration does not make me happy," I replied. "I am sick of hearing of my raven locks and star-like eyes, and could almost wish I had red hair and a turned-up nose: perhaps my partners would talk sense then to me."

"But who ever heard of talking sense in a ball-room?" said Annie; "you need not go

there for any such purpose, for you are sure to be disappointed."

"That is just what I think," returned I, "and therefore I won't go to any more parties; they are nothing more or less than a miserable waste of time."

Aunt Martha seemed half inclined to agree with me: she too was becoming tired of our constant dissipation; but Annie pleaded so earnestly that I would go this once, just to please her, that I consented, and began to make preparations for the ball, though all the time declaring that it was a most irksome task.

A day or two before the party, aunt and I were much astonished by the sudden apparition of uncle Jacob, who arrived just as we were sitting down to tea. He had not felt well, he said, for some time past, and had come to be nursed. He looked, in truth, very ill,—far more feeble than I had ever seen him before; and a gentleness of manner, very different from his usual gruffness, struck us painfully, for I feared he must indeed be very ill to have become so mild and gentle. He remained talking to us a little before retiring to

rest; and as he saw me twisting some yards of blue ribbon into a trimming for my dress, he shook his head and muttered something, the only word of which I caught being "vanity."

"It is indeed, uncle," I replied. "I am quite tired of gaiety; but what can one do? Annie Gordon says I must be like my neighbours, and I suppose I must; but it is a weary life after all."

At this moment Grace came to me with an open book in her hand. "Cousin Harriet," she said, "will you please to hear me say my hymn?" and without waiting for a reply, she began to repeat the following lines:—

In some the soul doth sleeping lie,—
It hath no ear, it hath no eye;
No good in anything doth spy.
Ah, woe is me!

In some the soul now wakes, now sleeps;
Trifles to-day, to-morrow weeps;
No certain aim before it keeps
Of purpose high.

In some the soul is wide awake,
Its circuit through the earth doth take;
All lore doth seek its thirst to slake,
Yet thirsteth still.

Some happy souls there be and blest,
Who seek not here their final rest,
But upward strive to God's own breast
With steadfast will.

How is it, soul, with thee? Hast thou
The seal of Heaven on thy brow?
Art seeking God? Art seeking now?
Ah! weigh it well!

The value of that precious soul,
That hasteth on unto its goal,
To live while endless ages roll,
What tongue can tell?

As Grace repeated these lines, uncle Jacob bent forward with an eager, earnest expression of countenance; then, as she finished, he turned away, repeating as he left the room, "True, true, there's nothing here to fill the soul; it's all vanity and vexation of spirit."

CHAPTER XI.

I MECHANICALLY held the book in my hand instead of returning it to Grace; and my eye kept reading over and over again the questions asked in the fifth verse: "How is it, soul, with thee? Hast thou the seal of Heaven on thy brow? Art seeking God? Art seeking now?"

Could it be that in all my long and fruitless search after happiness *God* had been left out? It was at once a startling and a humbling

thought; and long after Grace and aunt had retired to rest I sat pondering the matter, and trying, but in vain, to shut my eyes to the truth, that up to this moment I had been living without God in the world. Yes, in my self-righteous attempts to do my duty, in my thirst for intellectual culture, in my pursuit of gaiety, God, my Maker and my Redeemer, had had no place.

It was not to win *His* approbation that I had striven to live a blameless and a useful life; it was not the hope of at length hearing these blessed words, "Well done, good and faithful servant," that had encouraged me to trade with such talents as God had given me: I had, to use the language of Scripture, been "spending my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which satisfieth not;" and the conviction of this brought a feeling of guilt and wretchedness upon my conscience which I found it impossible to shake off.

After a sleepless and unhappy night, I went down stairs next morning to learn that uncle Jacob was very ill. The doctor had already been to see him, and had left orders that he

him good-night, he suddenly looked up with a quick and eager glance, and said: "Lassie, listen to me. I have toiled all my days to get wealth and happiness, and I have found nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit. Maybe God will have mercy upon me, and show me, even now in my old days, that which is *not* vanity. Now, go away, lassie, and see that ye take a warning by me." He turned from me as he spoke, and I left the room, and went with Annie to the ball in no enviable state of mind.

The party that evening was a peculiarly gay one, but, during its long hours, one image alone was before my eyes, casting all around into shade,—the image of my old uncle coming at the close of his days to the conclusion that all he had lived for was vanity and vexation of spirit.

I went through the dance mechanically, took no notice of anything that went on, and I must have given strange replies to the questions addressed to me, for my partner asked if I felt ill; and when he handed me to my seat, Mrs. Gordon came up and said I looked so pale she was sure I must be suffering. As

I did indeed feel far from well, she, to my great relief, called Annie, and we drove home.

The servant who opened the door had a frightened look, which alarmed me. "How is my uncle?" I exclaimed; and then, without waiting to hear her reply, I flew past her, and hurried up stairs,—a glimpse of the doctor's hat and cane on the lobby table tending still further to increase my agitation.

The door of uncle Jacob's room was open, and I entered noiselessly. Aunt Martha was standing beside the bed. She looked up on my entrance, and a terrible misgiving came over me, as I saw her pale and anxious face. I advanced towards the bed, and there lay my uncle, the pale hue of death resting on his features, that unmistakable hue, which, once seen, can never be forgotten.

He raised his eyes as I entered, but there was no consciousness in their gaze, and it was with a mingled feeling of grief and terror that I drew near. O how my heart smote me, as I looked on the face of my dear uncle! While he lay dying, I had been in the midst of dancing, and scenes of gaiety, which sickened me now even to think of. Overcome with

grief, I laid my head on aunt's shoulder, and wept bitter tears. She put her arm gently round me.

"Dear Harriet," she said, "his illness came on very suddenly, else I should have sent for you."

"Oh, aunt," I replied, "this is dreadful; how did it happen?"

"About two hours ago," she answered, "he was seized with a fit. I sent at once for the doctor, and we did all that was possible for him; but it was of no use. The moment Dr. Grey saw him, he said that it would soon be all over."

At this moment uncle Jacob's expression changed. He looked up with a quick glance of intelligence, and said, "The verse, Harriet, the verse?" Aunt looked at me with a face which showed that she thought his mind was wandering; but I felt that it was not so, and a thrill of joy and gratitude filled my heart, as, with as much composure as I could muster, I repeated those tender words of Scripture, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The dying man clasped his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven, said, slowly and distinctly, "Ay, that's it. God so loved the world,—so loved—." His voice suddenly ceased; his hands fell passively on the bed, and uncle Jacob was dead.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER uncle Jacob's death I had a long and serious illness. The shock its suddenness had given me, added to the mental anxiety under which I was labouring, brought on a fever, and winter had given place to spring, and spring was fast verging into summer, ere I was able to leave my room, and join the circle down stairs.

During my long illness Miss Winslow was my constant visitor. She had tried at various times, in my days of gaiety, to say something to win me to better things, but Annie Gordon's influence had always counteracted it, and a secret feeling that my way of life could not meet with her approval, had made me avoid her as much as I possibly could, without being

and sadder views of my own heart than I had hitherto had. But she did not leave me there. She spoke of the love of God towards the unworthy, and pointed to the death of Christ as the greatest proof of that love which God could give. She showed how, by the death and resurrection of the Saviour, God was at once just and the justifier of the ungodly who believe in Jesus. Day after day, as she sat beside me, she opened up to me the character of God in its holiness and beauty, until it seemed joy enough for me that such a glorious Being existed. Then she dwelt on his delight in receiving and saving sinners, till my fears melted away, and I was able to draw near to the throne of grace with a child-like spirit, saying, in the words of the hymn,—

“ Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,—
O Lamb of God, I come!”

With what different eyes did I now view everything! I no longer wearied of my life, but looked on it as something exceedingly precious; as an opportunity given me of glorifying God, of learning more and more of that Blessed One who had so loved me as to give

his own Son to die for me. I rejoiced when I found those words in the Bible, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are his;" and I prayed earnestly for strength to enable me to walk worthy of so high and holy a calling.

How I longed now to do good! to tell others what a Saviour I had found; that they too might seek him and be happy! I longed to tell my friend Annie what a glorious thing it was to be a Christian!—what a noble thing to find one's self possessed of an immortal soul, which was to find its happiness in knowing and loving God! to have a life to spend in the service of the best of Masters, for the noblest of purposes, and with the most certain prospect of a glorious result! . Yes, those were happy days; and to my great joy aunt Martha appeared to participate in my feelings. She too had begun to feel the need of something more satisfying than we had hitherto found in our way of life. Uncle Jacob's death had startled her, and she listened with ever-increasing interest to Miss Winslow's simple, loving expositions of God's Word.

Many a peaceful hour I passed, reclining on my sofa, aunt working beside me, with Grace seated on her little footstool at our feet,—I had begun now to discover that Grace was not the uninteresting child I had once thought her,—while Miss Winslow read aloud to us the words of Holy Writ, explaining from time to time some difficult passage, or dwelling with deepest reverence and love on the story of the life and sorrows of the Crucified One.

The first time Annie Gordon came to see me, I spoke to her in glowing language of my new joys, beseeching her to seek the same Saviour who had brought such sunshine into my life; but to my great disappointment she listened coldly, smiled at what she termed my enthusiasm, and was seemingly quite unaffected by anything I could say to touch her heart.

"I knew how it would be, Harriet," she said, "as soon as I heard of those daily visits of Miss Winslow. This is just a new whim, and in your circumstances a very natural, nay, if you will, a very proper one; but depend upon it, as soon as you get better you will give it all up."

"Give it up!" I exclaimed; "oh, Annie, if you did but know the change that has passed upon me, you would not say so. Believe me, this is no passing whim."

"Well, well, we shall soon see, Harriet. For my part, I expect to see you abandon religion as you have done many other fancies, and lay it aside along with the mourning you are now wearing for your uncle."

I was too much hurt by Annie's speech to make any reply, and tears gathered in my eyes as I turned away from her. I felt how just was her remark about the way in which I had adopted and then given up one pursuit after another, and longed to convince her that *this* was not a thing which could be abandoned, since it was the work of God within me, and not the impulse of a changing fancy; but all my words were in vain. In despair at my want of success I took up the Bible, and finding the place which relates the Saviour's interview with the woman of Samaria, I said, "Listen to this, Annie; hear what the Saviour said to this poor sinful woman: 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall

give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

"And what does that mean," she asked.

"I think," replied I, "that this is the meaning of it: I have got an immortal spirit, which is always thirsting for something to satisfy it. All my life long I have been drinking of the water of this world's pleasures, and as they have no power to quench the soul's desires, I have been thirsting again and again. But now, in the time of sickness, God has drawn near and revealed himself to me. He has taught me why I was created, and for what purpose my life was given to me; and in the ocean of his love and mercy I have water to drink which satisfies all the wants of my spiritual nature: and you see that in this passage I have Christ's own promise that I shall never thirst, but that his grace shall be in me a well of water, not soon exhausted, but 'a living well, springing up into everlasting life.'"

I spoke earnestly, from the deep conviction of the truth of what I was urging, and for a moment Annie seemed solemnized; but it soon

passed away, and she left me declaring that I was every bit as good as our new minister, but that she hoped the fit would not last, else I should be spoiled to her as a companion altogether.

When I next saw Miss Winslow, I told her of my bitter disappointment with regard to Annie; for feeling the truth so deeply myself, I had made myself certain that Annie would feel it too. Miss Winslow sympathized with me, but did not seem at all astonished at the result of this my first effort to do good.

"My child," she said, "if you were to take a blind man with you to view some beautiful prospect which filled yourself with wonder and delight, would it, do you think, produce the same impression upon him that it did on you?"

"Certainly not," I said; "he could not see it, being blind."

"But," she continued, "if you were to describe the vivid hues of the sky, the bright lights and deep shadows which were alternately flitting over the mountain sides; if you descanted on the soft green of the grass, the brilliant tints of the rose, and the graceful bend of the tree as it mirrored itself in the

silvery stream,—would not you expect to find a responsive echo to all your expressions of delight and admiration?”

“No,” I replied; “it would be foolish to expect that from a blind man. He must *see* the view before it could please him.”

“And is it not even so with the heart of man, my child? Do you not remember the time when you yourself saw no beauty in the Saviour, that you should admire him? And why was this? Was it not because you were blind? Jesus was as fair and religion as attractive then as now; but you were blind and could not see; and it is the same with your friend Annie. What she needs is the opening of the eye of her soul to perceive spiritual things; and this is what only God can do for her. Let us pray for her, and use all means to win her to true happiness; but, at the same time, let us never forget that the work is God’s, not ours.”

I took Miss Winslow’s advice; and though I saw no fruit of my labour, yet the remembrance that the work was God’s encouraged me to persevere, and to go on sowing the good seed in faith and prayer.

It was not always sunshine with me after those days. I often found to my cost, as a German Reformer did before me, that "old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon." Many a time the sins of my heart rose up into new life, after I had vainly imagined that they were all slain. Many a time I grew cold in the service of God, and, by my inconsistencies, brought dishonour on the Saviour whom I loved. Many a time I went forth weeping, and sowed in tears, thinking the reaping-time would never come. But, notwithstanding all this, I was still upheld and enabled to persevere. Though the dark clouds gathered, the silver lining was ever visible; and, amid much weakness, "faint, yet pursuing," I went on my way, growing in grace and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour, and finding that word of God to be true which says that Religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. If there were times when I went mourning because of my sins and shortcomings, there were times also when the "living water," of which I drank, gushed up so sweetly within me, that I could do nothing save break forth into songs of

praise, singing with one of olden time, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

CHAPTER XIII.

ANNIE GORDON had spoken of "our new minister:" this requires a word of explanation. Very shortly after uncle Jacob's death, Mr. Blackwood received and accepted a call to another congregation, and a clergyman from Perthshire, the Rev. Horace Andrews, was appointed his successor. I could not help feeling glad when I was told of this change, for Mr. Blackwood was not a person whom I either liked or respected. I asked Miss Winslow what she thought of our new minister. "You shall judge for yourself, my child," was all the answer I received; but the smile which lightened up her countenance every time Mr. Andrews was mentioned, made me hope that he would prove to be a man of a very different stamp from his predecessor. My hopes were more than realized. As soon as he was settled he came to call on my aunt,

and both she and I were delighted with his conversation, and the sweet, earnest spirit which seemed to animate him. He soon became intimate in our house, and was ever a welcome visitor. In hearing him converse it seemed to me as if I were listening to another Miss Winslow, only that she spoke most of the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man, whereas Mr. Andrews dwelt chiefly on the great object of the Christian's faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. I soon began to see—and my after experience has but confirmed me in this—that the best way to grow in grace is by setting the person and work of the Redeemer ever before us. I was naturally inclined to dwell too much on the feelings and actings of my own mind, to dissect my heart, if I may so express it; and thus I many a time brought darkness into my soul. But Mr. Andrews taught me a more excellent way. "For every look you take at yourself," he used to say, "take ten looks at the Saviour." And when I did so, I found that it let in a flood of light and joy upon me, while the very brightness of that light revealed the darkness of my own heart, so that I was at

once humbled and gladdened. It is for every one a great privilege to have a godly pastor, but doubly so for the young disciple. How many doubts did Mr. Andrews' faithful sermons expel! How many difficulties did he solve; and how often did "a word in season" from him give new strength to my weary soul, enabling me to rise from the dust, and mount upwards as on eagles' wings with fresh and joyful alacrity!

Young believer, if God in his providence has given you a faithful pastor, be thankful, and prize him highly; but do not make an idol of him. Ministers are but the channels through which the living waters flow out to you, not the fountain itself. Use them as helps to lead you closer to Christ, and they will bring refreshing to your soul; but put them in the room of the Saviour, and you will find them to be only broken cisterns, which can hold no water and give no blessing.

Mr. Andrews was pre-eminently one of those to whom these words of Scripture may justly be applied, "My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was

afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.”*

A great change—though a gradual one—took place in our town from the time Mr. Andrews was settled among us. Balls began to be less frequented, and the services in the church to be better attended. There were fewer drunkards to be seen lounging about, disgracing our streets, and it was even rumoured that Philip Mason, the husband of the poor woman for whom I had once so industriously worked, had left off his evil ways, and had been seen once or twice in the vestry talking to the minister. Nay more, one Sunday in church, Miss Bissill had been seen to change colour during the course of a very solemn sermon, preached from this text, “And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not;”† while Miss Livy was observed to hold down her head as

* Mal. ii. 5, 6.

† 1 Tim. v. 13.

an allusion was made to the "modest apparel" with which women are commanded to adorn themselves.

And did *I* escape? Was I allowed to think myself perfect, now that I had begun to walk in the way which leads unto life? If I was indebted to Mr. Andrews for clear views of the way of justification, I was no less so for the many counsels and friendly reproofs which he gave me. Many a rebuke did this zealous and faithful servant of God administer when he found me—as, alas! he too often did—in-dulging my propensity for useless and desultory reading, when I should have been assisting my aunt in house-keeping, or employed in helping Grace with her lessons. I loved my minister all the better for this, and I remembered how David had said, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."* And I trust those counsels were not in vain; for I gradually learnt to interest myself more in the things in which I had been so deficient before, and my heart rejoiced when I one day

* Ps. cxli. 5.

heard aunt Martha tell a neighbour what a comfort to her dear Harriet had become since she had begun to like her seam, and to make tarts and puddings almost as well as herself. I fear there was more affection than truth in this last assertion, yet I certainly had improved.

Under Mr. Andrews' auspices I began a course of regular study, reading such works as tended to enlarge my mind and invigorate my intellect. I found a new pleasure in study, when I remembered that my mental powers were so many talents given me by God with which to trade and become rich in his service. In after years, too, I found my knowledge of languages to be a great blessing; for I spent some years in foreign lands, and was enabled more than once to testify for my heavenly Master; and I felt a joy that passes all expression when God was pleased to make me the instrument of bringing some of the slaves of Popery into the happy liberty of the children of God. Yes, a Christian is doubly blest,—blest in what he receives for his own soul, blest in what he is made the medium of transmitting to others.

What Mr. Andrews preached from the pulpit and exemplified in his life was sweetly seconded by his amiable wife, who was a beautiful type of what a pastor's wife ought to be. Gentle and modest in her manners, looking up to her husband with a love and admiration which were touching to behold, Mrs. Andrews went out and in among us, an example to believers, "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity." Miss Winslow and she soon became bosom friends; and truly happy was I when they associated me with them in their works and labours of love.

Together we visited the cottages of the poor. Under their direction I began to teach a class of girls in the Sunday school, and was soon so busily and so happily employed that I found the days scarcely long enough for their pleasant duties, and wondered when I thought of a speech I had once made to aunt Martha, to the effect that I was weary of my life. I had lived to myself before; I was now living to God, and it was a blessed and a happy life, gilded with the sunshine of His love in whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness I

found to be better than this earthly life with all its enjoyments.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Mr. Andrews had been our pastor for about six months, two circumstances occurred which made a deep impression upon me. One of these was the marriage of Miss Livy Bissill.

Our former minister, Mr. Blackwood, had always been a great admirer of her. Either herself or her fortune, or both, had such attractions for him that he found it impossible to live any longer in single blessedness; and accordingly he paid various flying visits to our good town, and was seen to way-lay Miss Livy with the most determined perseverance. He had a sort of dread of the elder sister, which prevented his going much to their house; but he contrived to meet his beloved Miss Livy at the houses of every other person in the town, ours not excepted. Moreover, he had several walks with her in a field near Mrs. Gordon's, where sundry innocent-looking sheep and lambs

were feeding, suggestive of peaceful and loving images, and where, from a back window, Annie Gordon observed him give her his arm in a most gallant style.

Shortly after these proceedings Mr. Blackwood paid a stealthy visit the very day after Miss Bissill, accompanied by her friend Miss Yellowlees, had gone to the country for a few days' change of air. It was during that time that the final arrangements were supposed to have been made; certain it is that on Miss Bissill's return she was informed by her sister that she was actually engaged to the minister. Judith's wrath was extreme; but for the first time in her life Miss Livy remained firm to her intention, and after a series of grievous altercations Miss Bissill condescended to yield the point. No one accused her of having done so with a good grace, still, the point *was* yielded, and preparations for the wedding were begun.

Miss Livy was now in all her glory. Every inconvenient hour of every day she was at the unfortunate Miss De Blonde's, choosing dresses, disarranging caps, and ordering every sort of unimaginable bonnet. The good-humoured

little French-woman went nearly deranged, and when her labours were at length completed, and the last of the trousseau sent home, she had an attack of nerves which confined her to bed for a week; while the little errand-girl, whose duty it was to carry handboxes between the shop and the houses of the customers, laid the foundation of a series of corns which must have lasted her for the rest of her life.

It came at last, that momentous wedding-day; and the whole town was in a commotion. When the morning dawned it presented a sort of April face—drizzly rain alternating with pale sunshine, with every now and then little gusts of wind, as if there were a strife going on among the elements which of them should have the privilege of being present on such an occasion as the real, actual wedding of Miss Livy Bissill. The drizzle, with true Scotch pertinacity, at length prevailed; and we drove off to Miss Bissill's, passing our less fortunate neighbours who were trudging thither on foot with pattens and umbrellas.

When we arrived, Annie Gordon came and seated herself beside me.

"Have you seen the bride yet?" she asked, with something more than a smile on her countenance.

"No," I replied; "but, Annie, I do entreat you not to make me laugh, *however* she may be dressed."

"*I* make you laugh, Harriet! I promise you that if Miss Livy does not make you laugh, *I* won't."

At the appointed time Mr. Andrews walked in, his grave, earnest face looking, I could not help fancying, a little put out. He took his place at the head of the room, the rest of the company grouped themselves around, and then the door opened, and Miss Livy, leaning on the arm of a superannuated cousin, who was dressed in a purple coat and white waistcoat, walked slowly into the room, followed by Miss Bissill and Miss Yellowlees, who were to act as bride's-maids. Miss Livy's face was quite concealed behind a large fan, covered over with birds of paradise, which spread forth fabulously long and broad tails, evidently with the obliging intention of hiding the blushes of the fair bride. But if Miss Livy's face was concealed, so was not her dress; and

at the first glimpse of it, I turned round and hid my face behind Annie, to prevent my amusement being too evident.

"For shame, Harriet!" she whispered; "I am sure I am not making you laugh;" and she put on an expression of mock gravity which made matters still worse.

Miss Livy had *in part* carried out the intention she once expressed of wearing white lace over white satin at her wedding; but she had added considerably to the original idea. The skirt of her dress consisted of seven flounces, proceeding from the waist downwards. Three of these were of white lace and three of lilac crape, white and lilac placed alternately; while in the centre was the seventh, a short, wavy, vandyked little flounce of the brightest yellow, Miss Livy's favourite colour, and of a rich silk. Whichever way the bride moved, this pert little flounce moved also. Sometimes it stuck straight out like a fan; at other times it blew up, giving its wearer the appearance of a large mushroom turned upside down; and during the whole ceremony it managed to make itself excessively and exclusively conspicuous.

"Did you ever remark the appearance of the large pansies in our garden?" whispered Annie.

"Do hold your tongue," I entreated.

"Heart's-ease, I should have said," she continued; "for such she is sure to prove to her husband. And only look at her head! Miss De Blonde will make her fortune out of *that* cap."

The cap in question was an airy framework of net and tulle, thickly dotted over with little bunches of orange-blossom. Not contented with the large wreath of that favoured flower which encircled the cap, Miss Livy had managed in every possible and impossible place to stick in little sprigs of the same, till her head bore a striking resemblance to one of those flower-baskets which vegetable women carry on their heads to market. The uniformity of colouring which, as a bride, she had been obliged to exhibit on her head, was abundantly made up for by the enormous bouquet that was fastened in the front of her dress, and which reared its stately pile of roses, lilies, tulips, and every kind of flowers, till it met her chin; so that Miss Livy was

literally, as well as figuratively, pillowing her head on a bed of roses.

The happy bridegroom was as ruby-coloured and good-humoured, as fat and uninteresting, as ever. He took his place beside Miss Livy with as cool an air as if it had been any other person's wedding but his own. When the knot was tied, he turned towards her, and giving her a salute which resounded through the room, exclaimed, "Long life and happiness to you, Miss Livy, my dear, and the same to myself!"

The two bride's-maids were attired in plain brown satin gowns, with green and yellow ribbons in their caps; and anything more forbidding than the two looked, is not easy to imagine. Miss Bissill's countenance was grimness personified, and she could scarcely have looked more solemn had she been present at her sister's execution; which, indeed, she seemed to consider her present step to be. Every line of her expressive visage, whenever she looked at her sister, said as plainly as visage could speak, "Idiot!" while in Miss Yellowlees' pale-green eyes and turned-up nose there was fully as much envy as contempt visible. The mar-

riage service was most solemn, and soon put all ideas of the ludicrous to flight. Yet I could not help noticing the simpering air with which Miss Livy listened to the words which bound her to love, honour, and obey Mr. Blackwood; nor the way in which she kept smoothing down the refractory yellow flounce, and giving little audible sighs from time to time.

After the wedding we had a grand lunch, and a number of speeches were made, one of which greatly amused me. It was eloquently uttered by the superannuated cousin, wherein he compared Miss Livy to Venus, and various other members of the heathen mythological family, irresistibly reminding me of the picture of the clergyman and his wife in Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield." After lunch, Miss Livy—I remarked that no one ever seemed to recollect that it was necessary to address her by her new name—went up stairs to change her dress. She re-appeared in a cherry-coloured silk, with a row of primrose bows all down the front, and a bonnet which fully accounted to me for Miss De Blonde's sudden attack of nerves. The carriage drew up, and Mr. Black-

wood handed her in, exclaiming as he did so, "Take care of the step, Miss Livy!" and the next moment the happy couple were whirled off amid a storm of old shoes, sent after them by the two maids, and a serving-man who had been hired to assist on this great occasion.

As aunt and I returned home, the last thing I heard on quitting the room was Miss Bissill's voice, exclaiming, in a concentration of disdain to her amiable sister-bride's-maid, "What an idiot that Livy has made of herself now!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE other circumstance to which I have alluded was of a very different nature from Miss Livy's wedding: it was a sermon preached by Mr. Andrews. I have to look back through a period of many years to recall that quiet Sabbath afternoon, when aunt and I were seated in our family pew, with little Grace between us; but long ago though it is, I shall never forget the expressive looks which aunt Martha and I interchanged when our minister gave out as his text, "All is vanity and vexa-

tion of spirit." In a moment uncle Jacob seemed to stand before me with his restless, unhappy face, repeating the words with a bitterness which showed how fully he felt their force and their truth.

In a moment my past life, with its weary longings, its unsatisfied cravings, passed before me; and it was with no common interest that I fixed my eyes on the preacher's face, in earnest desire to know how he would treat such a theme. With perfect simplicity Mr. Andrews opened up the subject, and showed us of whose hearts those words were the utterance. They were, he said, the words of those who made the world their portion and their all; and of those also who, though they had indeed chosen God as their portion, were yet foolish enough to expect too much from earthly things,—such as were as yet only babes in the school of Christ.

He spoke of man having been made in the likeness of God, and made to enjoy God as his satisfying portion. Then came the fall, when man lost this likeness, and immediately began to seek his happiness apart from God. But the spirit, though fallen, was immortal still,

and so infinite in its desires, that nothing short of God could ever satisfy it. Hence the melancholy spectacle presented of this fallen creature seeking through the whole earth for something to fill the soul, but all in vain. Now it was ambition, and for a little moment, while in the pursuit of his object, he fancied himself happy;—but no sooner was that object attained than he found he had grasped a shadow,—a mere phantom, which could never satisfy; and in bitter disappointment he cried out, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit!”

Again, it was riches that were to fill his soul, and he strained every nerve, and toiled day and night, to amass them;—but when he had filled his coffers with gold, and when men bowed down before him, and almost worshipped him for the sake of the golden idol he had set up, he discovered how little his silver and gold could do for him, and how far he still was from the satisfaction he had expected; and again, in the misery of his disappointed hopes, he was forced to exclaim that “all was vanity and vexation of spirit.” And so with learning, and friendship, and love.

Solomon, the wisest of men, the one who had more in his power than others, and was therefore in a better position to try every source of earthly joy, had given *his* verdict, after he had gone the round of all, that "all was vanity and vexation of spirit." "Who will show us any good?" is the ever-repeated question of the restless heart of man; and throughout the wide universe a mournful silence is the only answer vouchsafed. And need we wonder that it should be so? Can finite things fill the wants of an immortal spirit? Can the things that perish in the using satisfy the desires of a being who is to live when time and the things of time shall be no more? It was, he told us, the great love of God that prevented our finding perfect satisfaction in the things of earth. Our heavenly Father desired to draw us back again to himself. He wished to give us a joy worthy the acceptance of immortal beings, and lasting as the soul which was to partake of it; and therefore it was that he had inscribed "vanity" on all things below, and that in the gospel of his grace he was crying aloud to men to look unto him and be saved—to come unto him and be at

rest. Of God alone can it be said, "*He satisfieth* the desire of every living thing."

He spoke next of the folly of those who, with God for their portion, were yet expecting great things from this world; and who, when disappointed in their hopes, were inclined to murmur against their best Friend, as though he had dealt hardly with them. Such Christians, he said, had need of affliction to wean them from the love of present things. They needed the strings of those harps to be broken whose music was leading them astray from their true portion. They must learn that their happiness consists in being conformed to their Saviour, and this can only be done through suffering.

Was the Master to be crowned with thorns, and the servant with a garland of flowers? Was Christ to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and the Christian to go through this sin-stricken earth a light-hearted being, shielded from every blast of adversity, and finding a happy home in that world in which his Master had not where to lay his head, but wandered about a stranger and a pilgrim all his days? Surely not. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his

Master, and the servant as his Lord." Not that the child of God is to be an unhappy or gloomy creature, hanging his head like a bulrush and refusing to be glad—far otherwise. The treasures of earth, and sea, and sky, are spread out for his enjoyment. The wonders of nature, the delights of science, the joys of friendship, *enjoyed in God*, all are open for his acceptance; and the favour of the great God is over all, and his blessing, that blessing which maketh rich and to which is added no sorrow, rests evermore on his head. But still, spite of all this, his being an imperfect creature implies the necessity of a discipline which is often grievous to the flesh to bear, while the feeling of sin within causes him oftentimes to cry out with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am!"

Mr. Andrews concluded by urging a free salvation on our acceptance, and so sweetly commended the Saviour whom he loved, that as I walked home, the inward breathings of my soul ascended to the throne of grace, and the language of my inmost heart was, "May *this* God be my God for ever and ever, and may he be my guide even unto death!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"WILL you come with me to visit Anne Mason?" said Mrs. Andrews one afternoon.

I gladly assented, and we set off; but the name called up a host of recollections that were far from pleasing, and which kept me in thoughtful silence till we reached our place of destination. It was not that I objected to go to a dirty house in a miserable locality, for such places were familiar to me now, and I had learnt to love the work of visiting the poor, and esteemed it a privilege to minister to their wants; but this purposed visit reminded me of work once eagerly and impulsively undertaken, to be as quickly abandoned in disgust.

We went silently through narrow streets, and down dirty lanes, till we came to the door of Anne Mason's cottage. What a change was there! I could scarcely believe my eyes as we entered the room. The old brown paper had disappeared from the window, and in its stead were clear panes of glass through which the afternoon's sun was cheerily pouring its light. A flower-pot or two stood on the sill,

in which were roses and mignonette, sending forth their fragrance as freely and gladly as if they were blooming in a palace;—more so, indeed, for they seemed to feel how much they were prized in this lowly abode. The floor was nicely swept and sanded, and near the window, busily engaged with her needle, sat Anne Mason, the hue of health on her cheek, and the smile of contentment brightening her countenance. A neatly dressed young girl was preparing the evening meal; and at one end of the room was the father, one little boy at his side, and another seated on his knee, busily repeating the lessons they had been taught at school.

Mrs. Mason rose to welcome us; and the little boy, sliding down from his father's knee, ran to set chairs for us, looking up at Mrs. Andrews with a bright smile as she patted his curly head. After a few words relative to the children's lessons, Mrs. Andrews turned to me and said, "You see a great improvement in Mrs. Mason's health since you were last here, do you not?"

"And in everything around her," I mentally exclaimed, as I assented to the remark; while

a blush of shame tinged my cheek, as I thought of the two years that had elapsed without my once having been in person to inquire for the sick woman.

"God has been very kind to me, dear young lady," said Anne, courtesying. "He has restored health to my body, and he has, I humbly trust, given health to my soul too."

My heart warmed towards the poor woman as she spoke; for I knew that she was now a sister in Christ, and as I looked at her modest face, on which seemed to rest the peace which passeth all understanding, I drew near to her as to a friend, and we were soon engaged in a deeply interesting conversation, while Mrs. Andrews began to talk to the husband.

Anne told me, in her own simple way, how God had made use of her long illness to teach her the vanity of earthly things, and to awaken her anxiety about those of another life. She told me how Miss Winslow had come to her in her darkness, and been to her as the guiding star which led her to the foot of the Cross. "I found rest and peace there," she added; "peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ." Then she told me how Mr. Andrews' faithful preaching had been the means of inducing her husband to abandon the vice that was hurrying him to destruction. "He is such a comfort now, to me and my children, such a good husband, such a kind father;" and her eye wandered from him to the little boys, who were showing Mrs. Andrews the pictures in their story-books, and repeating their little texts.

As Anne continued the recital of what God had done for her and her house, I could not help thinking of Miss Bissill's remark on hearing that Mason had become a regular attender at church: "I don't like those pious doings," she said, "nor those sudden changes; they savour too much of Methodism for me. Let me see good works, good conduct at home, and then I will believe that good has been done."

I wished that Miss Bissill had been present, to see with her own eyes the scene that greeted us as we entered the cottage, and to be a witness of the peace and contentment which reigned there.

From this time I paid regular visits to

Anne's humble abode, and felt that my intercourse with her was as profitable for me as it was pleasing to her. Her earnest piety stirred me up, and her homely yet striking way of expressing herself on religious subjects often tended to present them to me in a clearer light than I had seen them in before. I learnt from her how much grace can do in opening up and cultivating the understanding. I had been "a great scholar," as Anne termed it, all my life, and she but a poor ignorant woman; yet I generally found that *I* was the leaner, and she the teacher; and I saw how true it is that God often chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.*

And where was Annie Gordon all this time, and how employed! Alas! she was shutting her ears, lest the voice of the charmer should reach her heart and win her to Christ, and she was pursuing a course of gaiety which eventually undermined her health and brought her to an early grave. Annie had never been a very robust girl. Several members of her family had died of consumption, and her med-

* 1 Cor. i. 27

ical attendant had once told her mother that if she did not take great care of her, and keep her away from heated assemblies, she would soon add to the victims of that dire disease.

Remonstrance and warnings were in vain. Annie declared her determination to enjoy life while she could, and she continued to frequent balls and parties, till one bitterly cold evening in autumn, when she caught a cold which settled on her lungs and confined her to the house for the most part of the ensuing winter.

I often visited her in her sickness, and tried to lead her thoughts to the Saviour and his love for her soul. But I could seldom get her to listen. She preferred my company to being alone, but I could plainly see that she would have liked it better, if I had refrained from everything relating to God and eternity. She always put off the question of being prepared for death, and would not believe she was seriously ill. She flattered herself that she had a long life still before her, and her only regret seemed to be that her present illness prevented her from continuing her career of dancing and gaiety. With a quiet yet steady determination she put aside everything relat-

ing to the life beyond the grave: like one of old, she deferred it to "a more convenient season;" and the Searcher of Hearts alone knows whether that season was ever granted to her.

As spring advanced, Mrs. Gordon yielded to Doctor Grey's entreaties to take her abroad; and when they set off to the south of France, I felt that I had taken leave of my old companion for ever. And so it proved. I never saw my bright young Annie again. She lingered for more than a year and then died. Of the state of her mind at the last, I never could get any satisfactory account; and the tears which I shed over the loss of my early friend were rendered doubly bitter by this terrible uncertainty respecting the state of her immortal soul.

CHAPTER XVII.

I HAVE been led somewhat unconsciously into many cogitations and reminiscences of my early life, by a question put to me by my little grandchild, who is sitting beside me learning to hem her first pocket-handkerchief.

"Grandmamma," she said, "what has made your hair so gray?"

"Old age, my child," I replied.

"And what gave you all these scores in your face, grandmamma?"

"Old age," was again my answer.

"Grandmamma," continued the little prattler, "you must be very old indeed, for your hair is very white, nearly as white as grandpapa's, and you have many holes here;" and the little hand was raised to my face, which it fondly stroked, and then the soft peachy cheek was laid against mine, and my little Jane exclaimed, "Dear grandmamma, I love you very much, although you *are* so old. Now do tell me a story, dear grandmamma."

The entreaty for a story is the invariable termination to all Jane's remarks and questions; and well does the little fairy know that grandmamma cannot resist the pleading look and the sweet kiss by which her request is accompanied; so a story is told, and, long before it is done, grandpapa has laid aside his book, to watch, with a grandfather's interest, the grave little face that looks up at me with such unwearied attention.

We must take care not to spoil little Jane : she is our youngest grandchild, the only child of my sweet daughter Annie, who went home to be with the Lord the very day that saw her a mother. The widowed husband, Dr. Watt, lives with us, and is my husband's assistant—so at least he persists in calling himself—though it is many a day since my dear partner in life has discontinued his medical visits, and he only gives advice on very urgent occasions, when Dr. Watt (who looks up to him with the greatest respect) assures him that his long experience and practice have made him a much fitter person to judge of the merits of a difficult case than one so young in the profession as himself.

It is pleasant to see modesty in youth, doubly so when accompanied by real talent, as is the case with my dear son-in-law. Dr. Watt is the staff of our old age ; and little Jane would be, as I have before hinted, in danger of being spoiled, were it not that I have a great dread of that : the path of life is so much rougher for the spoilt child than for one who has been early trained to habits of self-denial.

How beautiful my husband looks at this moment, with the sunlight resting like a glory on his gray hairs! It reminds me of that text, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness."* Well may I bless God for having given me such a husband, for a true guide and protector he has ever proved to me.

He came to our town as Dr. Grey's assistant and successor; and, before he had been many months among us, there was not a poor or sick person far or near who did not bless the very name of Mr. Stewart. And when, in course of time, he obtained his degree and we were married, every one was pleased, and the cottagers, with whom I was no stranger, rejoiced that they should still keep their "dear Miss Harriet" among them.

When good Dr. Grey died, we removed into his house,—a large and commodious one, with a garden behind, and a pleasant meadow beyond it, in which our children ran about, and got health and strength. We had three sturdy boys, and two beautiful little girls, the

* Prov. xvi. 31.

elder of whom was my sweet Annie, of whom I have already spoken.

Alexander, our eldest son, after studying under his father, went out to India as a medical missionary ; but, before he had been long a labourer there, he was seized with fever and died. We had lent him to the Lord all the days of his life, and when, in the morning of his days, the message came, "The Lord hath need of him," we bent in submission to his holy will ; but it was a sore trial, and my husband looked an older man from the day the tidings came.

Our second boy, Horace, was born the year that dear aunt Martha died. He came to be a comfort to me then, for my heart was deeply wounded when my kind, affectionate aunt, my second mother, was taken away ; and he has been a comfort to me ever since.

When I sit on the Sabbath-day in our old pew in church, and look up at the pulpit from which Mr. Andrews—now at rest from his labours—used to speak to us the words of life and peace, I can scarcely believe that that earnest face, with its dark eyes bending so tenderly over the congregation, is the face of

my own son, the little Horace, who seemed but yesterday to be kneeling on my lap and lisping out, in child-like accents, "Our Father which art in heaven:" yet so it is; and people tell the thankful mother how much benefit they derive from their beloved pastor's ministrations; and with a mother's trust, she believes it and is glad.

Our third son,—ah! my eyes fill with tears as I write,—my darling John, was drowned while trying to save the life of a child who had fallen into the river at a time when it was swollen with heavy rains. I cannot dwell on this subject, for he was my youngest, my Benjamin, and very dear to me. Yet here, too, I have cause of thankfulness; for though young in years he was old in Christian experience when he was taken home. Peace be to his memory!

And who is this who comes in and peeps over my shoulder while I write, clasping her arms around me, and playfully trying to get possession of my pen, for she fears, from the glimpse she has caught of my eyes, that I am dwelling on some sad theme? It is my own bright-eyed Emily,—my only daughter now;

and she is the very light of our eyes and the joy of our house. It is she who cheers us when we are sad, who reads to us when we are weary, and who manages our house in as masterly a style as ever did aunt Martha. I wonder how I could have used the word *masterly* in speaking of Emily, for she is the most feminine of women.

But I must cease talking of my family, else I shall weary the reader, and make him think that old ladies are too much given to talkativeness, especially when they get upon such subjects as their children and grandchildren; so I dismiss Emily with a kiss, and tell her to go and invite Horace's children to tea; and little Jane looks up from her work to call out, "Aunt Emily, don't forget to get strawberries for tea."

As Emily leaves the room, an elderly lady enters and salutes me affectionately. She has come to consult me about a young person, a granddaughter of Anne Mason. I tell her how much I like the girl, and how anxious I am that she should be well trained. So she says she will receive her into her house, and she goes away, after slipping a little parcel of

sweetmeats into Jane's lap. Ah, that child ! I fear cousin Grace, in spite of her good sense and her being an old maid, is spoiling my Jane too !

This elderly lady is indeed the little cousin Grace of former days. She has never married, and has devoted her life to an object which my husband considers a most important one,—that of training young girls to be good household servants. She has generally two or three in her house at a time, and as soon as the labour (Grace calls it pleasure) of teaching them has been got over, she sends them out to service and begins the work anew. Her earnest piety and quiet good sense render her peculiarly fitted for this work ; and many are the faithful servants, whose services are greatly prized by the inhabitants of our town, who owe all they know, and all they are, to cousin Grace's prayerful and painstaking efforts.

What a contrast Grace is to two maiden ladies whom I knew in my youth,—Miss Bissill and Miss Yellowlees ! *They* spent their days in idleness and in spreading reports, far oftener false than true, of all their neighbours. They were miseries to themselves, and finally to

each other (they lived a sort of cat-and-dog life together after Miss Livy's marriage); and when they died no one was sorry, and no one had a kindly recollection of them or their deeds. Cousin Grace grew up following in the footsteps of Miss Winslow; and when that honoured servant of God was called away, amid the tears and lamentations of all around, to enter into the joy of her Lord, Grace took her place, and became, as I have said, a useful and honoured member of society.

And now, a word ere I lay down my pen.

How strange it seems to me to be writing about my early days, and about the friends and companions of my youth, who have all passed away, and whose place on earth is known no more! I say strange, because, although my head has the snows of more than three score winters resting upon it, and although my face, as my grandchild has just told me, is old and wrinkled, yet my step is light, and within my heart is a joyousness that gives me the feeling of possessing the freshness of perpetual youth.

When I think about it,—as folk *will* think who are called old, and yet feel a spring of

youthfulness within them,—the only explanation I can give of the matter is this, that the well of living waters which the Lord, in his rich grace, put within my soul in my early days is still there, “springing up into everlasting life.”

I like that expression, “springing up;” it speaks of such life and buoyancy. There is no dull sluggishness in the life of grace—no stagnation, no death. The Christian’s course may not, it is true, be always a smooth one, not always unhindered in its onward path to the eternal ocean. There are many obstacles in the way, many rocks to be avoided, many a tempest to lash its waters, and stir them to their very depths: nevertheless it is a right, joyous course; and the very necessity of surmounting obstacles, and of breaking through difficulties,—the very necessity of making progress, as well amid the tempest’s roar as in the bright and sunny day,—does but tend to purify its waters and to impart fresh vigour to its onward career. It gives a mightier impulse to the “springing up,” which is the chief character of its hidden life.

When I look back upon the way by

which my heavenly Father has led me, I see how good and how wisely ordered every step of it has been. I have had trials; but they have been to me, I humbly trust, what the furnace is to the gold,—a means of purging me from the dross of sin and worldliness. Sad bereavements, too, I have experienced. I have seen one after another of my beloved ones laid in the dust. But as I wept over their graves, I could not sorrow as those who have no hope: for I seemed to hear a voice saying unto me, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead;"*—and my heart, though stricken, was comforted, and I could look forward to the time when Jesus shall come again, and when those who sleep in Jesus shall come with him; that time foretold in Scripture when we shall be for ever with each other, and for ever with the Lord.

I have had joy, too, in my Christian course; deep, true joy: the joy of forgiveness, the joys of fellowship with the Father and with the

* Isa. xxvi. 19.

Son ; the gladness of knowing that as surely as I am a partaker of grace here, so shall I be of glory hereafter.

And I have had joy in my work. Oh ! how blessed I have found it to labour for Christ ! When I have clothed the naked and fed the hungry, and heard the benedictions that were implored to descend on my head, I have felt it a happy thing to have been made a steward of God's bounty : but when I have seen the dull eye brighten as I spoke to the poor tried believer of the Saviour in whom he trusted ; and when I have seen the tear fall from the eye before unused to weep for sin, as I spoke of the Saviour's sufferings and the Saviour's love,—then I could only thank God in my heart for making a bruised reed like me the messenger of his glorious gospel. *In my heart* I have thanked him, for my joy was too great for words.

Yes, throughout my long and chequered life, from the day when I first rested my weary soul on the promise of a covenant-keeping God, and found in Him a satisfying portion, until now, when I sit awaiting the voice which shall call me, saying, " Arise, my love,

my fair one, and come away,"* I have enjoyed in the service of God an abiding peace, which enables me to declare that I would not give up my hope in Christ for all the treasures of this wide earth : and I would entreat all those young persons who read this my experience to give themselves to God now, in the days of their youth, that at the close of life they may be able to say, as I do now, " Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."†

* Song of Solomon II. 12.

† Ps. xliii. 6.



